

# THE ARGOSY.

NOVEMBER, 1898.

## COLONEL FANE'S SECRET.

BY SYDNEY HODGES, AUTHOR OF "WHEN LEAVES WERE GREEN."

### CHAPTER XXXVIII.

NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA.

THIS is what Hugh wrote :

"Sydney, May 2nd, 187-.

"MY DEAREST VERA,—I can never consent to address you by any less endearing name; no matter what may happen, you can never hold a lower place in my heart, so you must bear with me.

"We arrived here last week after a fairly good voyage. The sea air certainly improved Grace's health greatly, but I cannot even now say much for her general condition. If anything will do her good it will be this climate. All my affairs are prospering out here. There is no need for me to live up country, so I have taken a house in the outskirts of Sydney, and, until it is ready, we are staying at an hotel. Grace is supremely happy and content with everything I say and do. Poor child! I begin to realise now what she has suffered, and how much I have to reproach myself with. But at least I shall strive as much as possible to atone for the past. Dreadful as the struggle has been, I feel more and more that you were right. It is impossible to realise that my dream of happiness here with you has so completely faded. It seems to me that it is the common lot. Not one in ten thousand attains the life of ideal happiness which he has pictured to himself. Fate marks out our pathway, and we cannot diverge from it. I often ask myself the question :

'Of love that never found its earthly close  
What sequel?'

"As far as I am concerned, however, the answer shall not be :  
'Streaming eyes and breaking hearts,' but something nobler. An

inward peace arising from a sense of a sacrifice made and a duty done, must be the end. It is all one can hope for. You, I know, will be sustained in the same way.

"How I wish you could see this lovely place. How little I dreamed that I should ever look on it again without you. The wonderful harbour with its blue expanse, its endless indentations, its wooded shores, its wealth of shipping is before me now, as fair a sight as any in the world. I dare not even hope that you may one day see it.

"God help me! I ought not to have written this letter. It awakens thoughts and feelings that must be conquered. They are an injustice to others. Yet, if they could know the suffering, and the sacrifice endured by both, I believe they would forgive us. In future I must strive to write only the news of our outward lives to you. The inner life and its struggles must be hidden. Were ever two persons so placed before? God help us both!

"You will know with what intensity I shall look for news of you. If you think it better not to write, I must be content. I leave all to you. I shall at least get news of you sometimes through my sister, and you of me. May God bless and keep you, now and always. Good-bye!

"Ever your loving friend,  
"HUGH CHETWODE."

Long after she had finished reading the letter, Vera sat gazing at it with tearful eyes. Her first impulse was to answer it in detail. Then the uselessness of such a course presented itself to her. What could come of it? Only pain to him and to herself. The self-sacrifice must be complete, as it too often is in this life; that is, if honour and rectitude are worth anything.

There was little sleep for her that night. That letter seemed the end of her past dream of happiness. Henceforth she must live a new life, with new thoughts, new aspirations, new hopes, if indeed hope were not quite dead.

The next day they went on over the great Scheideck, and past Rosenlaui, and on to Meiringen, and then, after a night's rest at the latter place, and a hasty visit to the Reichenbach fall, they journeyed over the Brunig to Lucerne. But not all the wonders of the Rigi, with its marvellous effects of sunrise, the glories of cloud-capped Pilatus, the beauties of the lake itself, could bring peace to Vera's heart. The task she had set herself, the sacrifice she had made, seemed more than she could bear. But there was no going back, and even if it had all to be lived over again, it is doubtful if she would have acted differently. After all it was only the common lot. How many of us are there who have not moaned with the poet:

"O death in life, the days that are no more!"

Vera had long since relieved the minds of both her old servant at

Jersey and of Mrs. King with regard to her whereabouts and her prospects. There was no longer any need for concealment. She had not been able to brace herself to the task of visiting Jersey. That would have been too great a trial under present circumstances ; but she led Mrs. Grey to believe that she was well and happy, and had sent her presents which tended very much to increase her comforts. So the old lady felt quite easy, both in mind and body. As to Mrs. King, she was loud in her praises of the gentleman who had taken her rooms, and paid her for a month, and then never occupied them ; and expressed a hope, which was meant to be kind, that she might one day see him there again, in company with Vera.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

## A REVELATION.

"A MAN on horseback has just brought this note and is waiting for an answer, my lord."

Lord Seagrove took the note and opened it. He glanced at the contents. They were in a strange hand-writing and signed by a name he did not know. He turned to the servant who was silently waiting.

"I will ring when the answer is ready."

"Yes, my lord."

The servant departed. Lord Seagrove glanced at the contents of the letter again. The look of mystification, which had overspread his face when he first opened it, grew more intense. He looked again at the envelope. It was marked "immediate." He settled back in his library chair, adjusted his glasses and began reperusing the letter with deep attention and intense astonishment. It was as follows :—

"Bath Hotel, Bournemouth.

"Sept. 19th.

"MY LORD,—I find it difficult to write these lines to you, and yet I feel it to be an imperative duty. I am suffering from an incurable disease. The doctor tells me my days are numbered. I feel therefore that there is no time to be lost. I am in possession of a secret, closely connected with your family, so strange that I can hardly expect you to believe it. The only other persons who were in possession of the secret are dead, and I feel therefore that my lips are no longer tied. In fact it is a matter of so much importance to you and yours, that I could not die in peace without letting you know. I entreat you therefore to come to me while I am yet able to tell you. I am too ill to move myself or I would come to you. I implore you not to delay, as it is a matter of the deepest importance.

"I beg to remain, my lord,

"Faithfully yours,

"JOHN WATSON, Major-General."

Lord Seagrove literally gasped when he had finished this letter. "What on earth does the man mean?" he said.

He sat considering a moment; then got up and rang the bell. The servant appeared.

"Tell Lord Burnham I wish to see him at once."

"Yes, my lord."

The servant departed. The venerable peer sat vacantly staring at the letter in his lap, totally unable to fathom its meaning. In a few minutes his son came in.

"What is it?" he said, as he advanced towards his father.

"Read that," answered the old lord, putting the letter in his hand.

Lord Burnham glanced at the contents in a casual sort of way, but before he had read far his attention became riveted on the paper. He sat down and read it again from beginning to end.

"This is very extraordinary," he said at length.

"Most extraordinary," echoed his father. "It seems genuine."

"Undoubtedly."

"Then what does it mean? Is the man mad?"

"It is not the letter of a lunatic, by any means."

"Just my idea. But what on earth does he refer to?"

"That is best known to himself. Shall you see him?"

"One feels almost bound to, if, as he says, he is a dying man."

Burnham's caution came to the surface. "Is it an attempt to extort money, do you think?"

"That occurred to me, but I fancy I know the name. If I am not mistaken he is a distinguished officer. At any rate a major-general is not likely to be a beggar."

"Well, if you mean to see him, the sooner you do so the better. What answer will you send?"

"Write a line for me and say I will be there this afternoon. You will go with me of course. It may be necessary to have a witness."

"Yes. Well, it is no use trying to fathom the mystery, but I can't help thinking it is a take-in of some sort."

"I don't know. The man seems serious enough. Anyway we can soon find out."

Lord Burnham went to the writing-table and penned the following:

"Seagrove Hall, Sept. 19th.

"SIR,—My father, Lord Seagrove, will be with you this afternoon at three o'clock.

"Yours faithfully,

"BURNHAM."

This was closed and handed to the mounted messenger, who at once started with it towards Bournemouth.

"I am awfully glad you have not gone, Tom," said Lord Seagrove; "that is, if it is anything of importance; but I hardly think it can



be. I don't know what I shall do when you are gone. I feel too old to be left alone, and yet they say the sea voyage is the best thing for you."

"I believe it is my last chance. I am feeling awfully shaky—all the energy seems taken out of me. After all it is only a matter of a few months. I may come back quite strong. I know the sea sometimes works wonders."

"God grant it may in this case," said Lord Seagrove.

"There goes the luncheon-bell. We shall not have too much time if we are to be in Bournemouth at three," said Lord Burnham.

On arriving at the hotel and inquiring for General Watson, they were shown up to a spacious apartment on the first floor, where a young lady was seated at a writing-table. She rose at their entrance, and as the servant announced their names, advanced to meet them with an unmistakable air of good breeding.

"It is very kind of you to come," she said. "My father was most anxious to see you. As he told you, he is very feeble. I will tell him you are here. Will you sit down?"

She left the room by an inner door, apparently leading to a bedroom.

"It is not a case of borrowing money evidently," said Lord Burnham. "An uncommonly lady-like girl, that. No lack of means here."

The daughter was back again almost before he had spoken.

"I am sorry to say my father is quite unable to come to you. Would you object to seeing him in his room?" she said.

"Not in the least," answered Lord Seagrove, whose curiosity was greatly excited. "He will not mind my son being with me, I suppose?"

"I think not. Will you come this way?" They followed her into the bedroom of the invalid. He was lying propped up with pillows on a couch near the window. In spite of the pallor of the face he showed signs of having been a strikingly handsome man and of powerful physique, but it was evident that some internal disease had brought him near his end.

He raised himself slightly as his visitors entered and motioned them to a seat. Then by a slight movement of his head he intimated to his daughter that he wished her to leave the room, and she withdrew.

"Your son, I presume?" the invalid said, looking at Lord Burnham but addressing the father. "You must not think me ungracious, but what I have to say was intended for your ears alone."

"I wish to have no secrets from my son," Lord Seagrove answered. "I am an old man now, and whatever you have to say, I thought it better for him to be with me."

"As you please," the invalid answered, "but I must warn you that my revelation is of a most extraordinary character, and you might wish the secret to be known to yourself alone."

"I prefer my son being here whatever it is," was the decisive answer.

"Very well—I can have no further objection." He paused a few moments, as if to collect his thoughts, then said:

"You had a sister—Lady Vera Colborne."

Lord Seagrove started. "I had," he answered, "a sister who was very dear to me. Unfortunately she died young."

"As you thought," the invalid said briefly.

"As I thought! I don't know what you mean. She died at Seagrove Hall in her twenty-third year."

"You must prepare yourself for a very startling surprise. She did not die at that time. I am prepared to prove it."

Doubts of the speaker's sanity, which had before crossed Lord Seagrove's mind again arose.

"You are making a most extraordinary statement," he said. "My poor sister certainly died at the time I name and was buried in the family vault."

"You think so, but it is to show you you are wrong that I wished to see you. Your sister lived for many years after. She married the man she loved—Colonel Fane. She had a happy life with him, and she bore a daughter who, I believe, still lives."

A rush of thought so sudden and remarkable crossed the minds of both Lord Seagrove and his son, that for a moment they could hardly speak. Vera—the marvellous resemblance—the very name! Was this the solution of the mystery?

"For heaven's sake tell me what you mean!" cried Lord Seagrove. "What you say seems nothing less than a miracle."

"It was something very nearly approaching one. She was resuscitated, as it were, from the dead. I was young and enthusiastic at the time. My friend and brother-officer, Fane, was, as you know, desperately in love with your sister. He told me of her death, or supposed death. He was half mad with grief, reckless, desperate. He imparted to me a scheme he had for seeing her once more in her coffin. He intended to gain access to her room at night by means of a balcony. I tried my best to dissuade him from the mad scheme as I thought it, but in vain. The finger of Providence was in it."

He paused a moment as if to gather strength. Lord Seagrove and his son sat speechless with astonishment. The invalid went on:

"Seeing he was determined, I agreed to help him. We drove at night to the outskirts of your park. He left me there, while I remained with the trap. After a long time, he returned almost mad with excitement. Indeed, when he told me what had happened, I thought he was mad. He said he had lifted the lid of the coffin and found her alive."

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Lord Seagrove, taking his handkerchief from his pocket, and wiping his brow, which was moist from the excess of his emotion.

"It was a case of catalepsy. I fear there are only too many," the General continued. "I proposed that we should arouse the house, and inform you. He would not hear of it. 'I have saved her from death,' he said, 'and she is mine by every law, human and divine. I shall take her away.' As I said just now, I was young and romantic at the time, and I really felt, moreover, that there was a good deal of justice in what he said. At any rate, rightly or wrongly, I agreed to assist him. With the utmost care, we removed her from the coffin, refilling it with some logs of wood which we found in the garden. Then wrapping her tenderly in an ulster and a rug, we carried her to the waggonette, and so to Fane's house, where she was nursed back to health by his sister."

Again he paused, evidently exhausted. For a few moments there was silence. Then Lord Seagrove seemed to recover somewhat from the deep emotion caused by what he had heard.

"This is a most astounding narrative," he said. "I should refuse to credit it if it were not for one circumstance. By a most strange coincidence, the daughter you assume to be alive is in this neighbourhood. Her resemblance to my dear sister, and the fact of her bearing the same name, has always been a profound mystery to us. But I must have some absolute proof of this strange tale."

"The proof should be in a written statement of the facts drawn up by Colonel Fane, and signed by me and by himself. That paper, I know, he intended to leave to his daughter. If the young lady you name is the daughter, she must have the paper."

"She would surely have told us."

"I don't know. You must forgive my saying it, but Fane was under the impression that his wife was driven to her supposed death by your unkindness. He may have conveyed that impression to his daughter."

An uncomfortable feeling pervaded Lord Burnham's breast. If this man's story were true, it was with his own cousin he had had such an unpleasant scene in Dublin. Had she been aware of their relationship? If so, his own actions might account for her silence.

"We must question Miss Fane at once," he remarked. "She may have the paper."

"I must have time to think," remarked Lord Seagrove. "It is all so astounding that I fail to grasp it. If what you say is true, Vera Fane must be my niece."

"It was that thought which was my chief motive in writing to tell you. In fact, I felt it an imperative duty."

"This might have occurred to you before," observed Lord Seagrove somewhat severely.

"I could not break my word to my old friend," answered the sick man. "It is only recently I heard of his death."

"How little we dreamed she was alive," Lord Seagrove continued. "What would I not have given to have seen her again, and to have

known that she was happy. But we must not intrude on you any longer. Whatever may be the opinion of your former reticence, there is no doubt you have put us under an obligation to you in stating the truth now. I shall hope to see you again, if you will permit me to call."

"I shall consider it a favour if you will let me know how things go on."

"I will certainly do so. Meanwhile, may I express a hope that your condition is not so serious as you seem to imply."

"I fear there is no hope," returned the sick man. "The trouble is here," he added, placing his hand on his heart.

They shook hands and left the room. The daughter was anxiously awaiting them in the next room.

"I am afraid this must have been a trying interview to your father," said Lord Seagrove. "At any rate he has told us all he wished. We need not trouble him again except to inquire after his health."

"I am very glad. It will be a relief to him to have seen you. He has been fidgeting about it so long."

"I sincerely hope he will be none the worse for it."

They said good-bye and passed out of the room. When they were in the carriage, Lord Burnham looked at his father inquiringly.

"Do you believe it?" he asked.

"It seems impossible to doubt it. It is so circumstantial. He is a man of position, of integrity; then there is the astounding evidence of the likeness."

"That might possibly be explained. This is a matter we must put beyond all doubt. We must examine the coffin."

"That has already occurred to me. But we must not create a scandal. How is it to be done?"

"It must be done in some way. We cannot take anyone's word in a matter of this kind. It is too much out of the ordinary events of life. If their story is true the coffin will confirm it. Things cannot remain as they are. We must communicate with them at Halton."

The restorations at Halton had been completed some time before, and the house presented pretty much the appearance that it did of old, except for a certain newness. Unlimited means can accomplish wonders in the way of building and furnishing, and the house had been ready for Bates and his party on their return from Switzerland. So they had again taken up their abode there.

CHAPTER XL.

RECONCILIATION.

EARLY the next morning Vera received the following note :

"Seagrove Hall, Sept. 20th.

"MY DEAR MISS FANE,—Would you do me the favour to see me at the earliest possible moment? It is on a matter of very great importance, and I particularly wish the interview to take place here, if you do not object. I send a carriage with this in the hope that you may be able to come. Lady Seagrove will be very pleased if you will stay to luncheon.

"With kindest regards, I am,

"Yours very sincerely,

"SEAGROVE."

Vera's heart stood still as she read this note. Was it possible Lord Seagrove had discovered her secret? No; it was known only to herself and her dead father. It could not possibly be this. And yet why should he wish to see her alone, and why should there not be even a reference to the rest of the household at Halton? She was bewildered and hardly knew what course to pursue. It seemed ungracious to refuse an old man so urgent a request, and yet she dreaded the interview more than she could express.

She must at least inform Mr. Bates. She found he was in his study, and, as she was always a welcome visitor there, he looked up with a pleasant smile as she entered.

"An unexpected pleasure! What fortunate accident brings you here?"

"A note I have received from Lord Seagrove. Will you read it?"

Bates took the note and ran his eye hastily over it.

"Have you any idea what it means?" he asked.

Vera hesitated a moment. Then she said: "I had an idea, but it is impossible. No, I have no idea."

"May I ask what was your first idea?"

"Not now. One day I may tell you."

"Then you have not told me all."

"It is not my secret. It was my father's, otherwise you would have known it before this."

"Well, I will respect it."

"But about going?"

"There can be no harm in that."

"And you do not mind?"

"Mind! How could I? That is, if you wish to go."

"I confess my curiosity is excited."

"And mine; but I shall know all about it on your return. That is, unless you prefer not telling me."

"I will certainly tell you, unless I am bound down to secrecy."

"Make haste back. The hours are long without you, you know."

"I do not think I will stay to luncheon, so I shall not be long."

Bates passed his arm round her and kissed her cheek. By an almost unconscious movement of the head Vera always turned her lips away. She did not mean to be unkind, but the movement sent a pang through her lover's heart.

"Well, good-bye!" he said. "I hope it is nothing to disturb you!"

"I do not see how it can be. Good-bye!"

She departed, and within half an hour was at Seagrove Hall. Lord Seagrove came out to meet her.

"This is kind," he said, as he shook hands. "Would you mind coming into the library? We shall be quieter there."

He led the way. As she followed him into the room Vera saw to her regret that Lord Burnham was there. He advanced to meet her and shook hands; then he drew forward an easy-chair, in which Vera seated herself.

Lord Seagrove meanwhile had taken his usual seat by the table: Burnham stood leaning with one hand on the table and looking at Vera intently. She noticed the look and also the visible agitation of the father. Again her fears returned to her, but again the idea seemed an impossibility, and she strove to dismiss the thought.

"My dear Miss Fane," Lord Seagrove began, "I have sent for you for a purpose so extraordinary that I hardly know how to begin. I must ask you a question. Have you any idea who your mother was?"

Vera started. All her fears returned; but this question might be only an attempt to learn the truth. She answered cautiously:

"I have, but it is a subject I do not wish to talk about."

"You know the secret of her birth?"

"I do."

"And death?"

There was a painful pause, and then Vera answered:

"Yes, and of her death."

"A most extraordinary story has been told me; it is hardly possible to believe it. I am told that your father rescued your mother from death—carried her off from her coffin, in fact—and that she lived many years after and became your mother. May I ask if you knew of this?"

Vera turned deadly pale. Her father's secret was known at last without any revelation from her. Must she admit it? There seemed no other course open to her.

"Yes, I do know it—I know it to be true. But I cannot imagine how you have learnt the fact."

"From the very man who was with him—General Watson, at that time a young officer in the same regiment."

"Is it possible? I did not know he was alive. Oh, how could he betray his friend?"

"But, my dear child, you do not seem to know what it involves," Lord Seagrove said, rising and taking her hand. "Have you realised that you are my dear sister's child? I knew—I felt—that there was some strange bond between us from the first moment I saw you. I cannot tell you the joy it is to me to know this. To think that you have come back to me almost like one from the grave!"

"But," said Vera, hesitating—"forgive me, I cannot feel the happiness which you seem to feel in this discovery. I understood that it was through your own and your father's unkindness that she was driven to her death; but for this, her survival would never have been kept a secret for a moment. How is it possible for me to feel any affection for those who spurned my father and were so unkind to my mother?"

"Who told you this?" asked Lord Seagrove.

"I have it in my father's own writing. As you know so much, I may tell you that he left a paper informing me of all this and of the happy life my mother afterwards led with him."

"You have heard but half the truth, I fear. Did he give you no reason for what he called our unkindness?"

"None, except that you thought him in a lower social position."

"It is better not to tell you what our real reason was. Yet it is hard to be unjustly accused in connection with one we loved so much."

"You loved her, yet drove her to her death. How are the two things possible? It is better for me to know the truth."

"Well, then, it is painful for me to tell you, but there was a blot upon your father's name. He was suspected of having cheated at cards. Heaven knows whether or not it was true; it was never proved; but he had to leave his regiment. Some of his friends refused to believe it—this Watson among the rest. Your mother never believed it; but it was the slur upon his name, not our unkindness, which nearly broke her heart."

"Ah, is this possible?"

"It is so, indeed. Although we disliked the connection, we should not have altogether opposed it if it had not been for this. You must see that, under the circumstances, we could not sanction the marriage. No doubt when he rescued her, she saw at once that secrecy was her best course—that it was best for him and for herself that the past should sink into oblivion. Yet, I believe if she had made it known, we should have welcomed her—at any rate, privately. You little know how fond I was of her. She had been my one companion through childhood. Her death nearly broke my heart."

The old man broke down completely. His voice shook, his eyes



filled with tears. Instinctively Vera put out her hand. He drew her towards him, and the next moment she was locked in his arms. Lord Burnham turned away to the window. He was not much given to sentiment, but there was a lump in his throat nevertheless. Lord Seagrove was murmuring over his newly-found treasure.

"I thank my God that He has given you back to me after all these years. You—the very image of your mother! The same hair, the same sweet eyes. Oh, Vera, you will be the delight of my declining years!"

"Forgive me for having done you such an injustice," said Vera. "How could I even suspect?"

"How could you? But you will not doubt me again. My sweet child—for her child must always be like my own—you will not leave us again."

Vera pressed away the tears which her own emotion had caused. She sat up.

"There are others who have claims on me," she said.

"I know. I have heard. We must talk about that, but not now. This is indeed a joyous day!"

Lord Burnham came from the window. He put out his hand and she took it silently.

"Let me welcome you to your true home," he said simply. There was real earnestness in his tone, and she felt it.

"It is all so strange and wonderful," Vera said. "But I cannot tell you the delight it is to me to feel that I really have some of my own people to care for me. Mine has been such a strange life. I have felt so completely alone—at least until I met Mr. Bates and his sister. And you really—really care for me?" she added, putting her hand confidently in Lord Seagrove's again. "Oh, it is indeed a happiness!"

"And all this time my wife is dying to know all about it," said Lord Seagrove, smiling. "She is not well enough to leave her room. We must go to her. She will be almost as delighted as I am, not only for my sake, but her own. You managed to captivate us all."

Lady Seagrove's delight when she heard the result of the interview was almost as great as that of her husband. She welcomed Vera in the most affectionate manner, and for the first time since childhood poor Vera really had the sensation of having found a mother. It was all very new and delightful finding herself among her own belongings, especially now the feeling was removed that her mother had been treated with unkindness. She could well understand the desire of the family to prevent an alliance with one upon whom a suspicion of dishonourable dealings rested, and on the other hand she could make allowances for the bitterness of her father's feelings if he felt himself innocent, as she was only too willing to believe.

Meanwhile Bates was waiting with much anxiety to hear the result of Vera's visit, but before luncheon time he received a hurried note

from her telling him that a remarkable thing had happened and begging him to come at once. He started on horseback without delay, and on his arrival was met by Lord Burnham in the hall, who took him at once to where the rest of the family were assembled. He was prepared for a great surprise, but nevertheless, when the facts were made known to him, he was utterly bewildered. The startling thought also occurred to him that the change in Vera's life and prospects might endanger their engagement, for in spite of his cordial relations with Lord Seagrove, it seemed to him not unlikely that an objection might be raised to Vera's alliance with a man so much her senior.

In spite of this, they were a very happy party at luncheon, and Bates's fears were somewhat removed by a remark of Lord Seagrove's during the meal.

"We cannot let her run away again just at present," he said. "You will be having her all to yourself before long and you must lend her to us for a little while now. In fact she must look upon this as her home until you carry her off. I am only too thankful that you are so near. She is already much too dear to us for us to lose her altogether."

So it was arranged that Vera was to go back to Halton with Bates and convey all the wonderful news to Mrs. Meredith with her own lips. Then she was to return to Seagrove Hall in the next day or two and take up her abode there for a time. Bates knew that it would be a wrench for his sister as well as for himself, but he felt that it would be selfish to object.

That night, when Lord Seagrove and his son were discussing matters over their cigars in the smoking-room, the question of the engagement cropped up, and Lord Burnham's worldly wisdom came to the surface.

"I thought you might have objected to the match," he said. "It seems hardly desirable considering the difference in the ages and in position."

"I have thought of that," his father answered, "but I suffered enough through my opposition to her poor mother's marriage. I don't wish to go through it again. No; if she loves him, she will meet with no opposition from me."

"Then there are the heavy mortgages," said Burnham reflectively, contemplating his cigar. "What is it Bates has advanced altogether?"

"Close upon £30,000," said Lord Seagrove; "but I should not let that consideration stand in the way for a moment if I thought the match objectionable," he added somewhat severely.

"Nevertheless it may make matters easy in that respect, and if this confounded depreciation in land goes on, we may want more. It's as well to be on the safe side."

## CHAPTER XLI.

## VERA'S PLEDGE.

LORD BURNHAM was not altogether prepared to accept the strange circumstances as they stood. "There is so much hankey-pankey about," he reflected; "so many wheels within wheels, such absolutely inexplicable things happening every day that one cannot be too cautious. Here we have taken this girl into the family and recognised her as a near relation in face of the fact that her mother was known to have died unmarried and was buried in the family vault. And on what evidence? On the *ipse dixit* of a man we know nothing about, and the posthumous statement of a man whose character was, to say the least, shady. It is true there is the extraordinary likeness, but that may be a coincidence. I confess I should like to sift this matter to the bottom, and in my opinion the only way to do so is to examine the coffin. Until that is done I shall not be satisfied."

It was thus he reasoned with himself, but possibly a more selfish motive was at work. If Vera were really his cousin certain considerable sums which had belonged of right to her mother, and at her supposed death had reverted to his father, would belong to Vera. The estates were already heavily involved; if this money had to be refunded, they must be still further dipped to his own detriment. It was hardly likely it would be insisted on, but Lord Burnham liked to be on the safe side, and he wished to probe the matter to the bottom.

He put these points to his father. The latter admitted that he was not unreasonable, but was unwilling to entertain a doubt as to a matter which had given him so much real happiness.

"If it comes to a question of the money, however," he said, "it would certainly be awkward. Your aunt's property has been absorbed by the estates and it would be next to impossible to refund it. Of course, before the money could be claimed, we must have something more than mere statements—there must be actual proof."

"And that proof is only in the coffin," said his son.

"The whole matter is a complication. Apart from any question of Vera, I have felt ever since the discovery that it is an extremely unpleasant thing to think that there is a coffin in the vault perpetuating a fiction as it were."

"Exactly," answered Burnham. "And, if at any future time by any unlikely chance it should be opened, what on earth would our descendants think?"

"It is awkward in every way, for if it is empty—of which I have

no doubt myself—the coffin really containing my sister's body, wherever that may be, ought to be placed there instead."

"According to Vera's statement, she died in Jersey," said Burnham.

"And was therefore in all probability buried there," his father added.

"I should say so certainly. There could have been no motive in taking her elsewhere. At any rate, I am more and more convinced that our first step should be to inspect the coffin."

"I am inclined to agree with you; but how are we to go about it?"

"Surely some excuse could be made. We might take the Vicar into our confidence, and get some undertaker from town—a man we could trust."

"At any rate, it is a matter to be kept as much to ourselves as possible. We might take Bates into our confidence also—his advice would be valuable; but on no account would I let Vera know. Poor child! She would be grieved indeed if she thought there was the slightest doubt of her *bona fides*. Indeed I have no doubt whatever myself."

"There is no need for letting her know. I will drive over and see Bates this morning and put the matter before him."

Meanwhile there was great lamentation at Halton. Franky vowed that Vera should not go away to live anywhere else.

"That horrid old Lord Seagrove," he said—"what business has he to take you away? I thought you were going to live here always. I should like to know how I am going to do my lessons. I declare I won't learn of anyone else!"

"You will soon have a tutor, my boy," said his uncle. "You are getting too much for the women-folk. We shall have to stuff you with Latin and Greek soon."

"Well, I could learn it just as well with Miss Fane here. I won't learn it if she goes. You can't make me learn it if I don't like."

"You wouldn't care to grow up an ignoramus, I suppose. I don't think even Miss Fane would care for you if you did that."

This argument seemed to silence Frank's opposition to the proposal, and at this moment the servant came to say Lord Burnham had arrived and wished to see Mr. Bates alone.

Bates went to him in the study. Lord Burnham imparted to him the gist of his conversation with his father and asked for his co-operation.

"It is a very strange position," Bates said. "Naturally as a matter of curiosity one would like to inspect the coffin; but it will be a difficult thing to arrange without its becoming known, will it not?"

"That is exactly what my father feels. But still, I presume we have a perfect right to enter our own vault, and some excuse can

easily be made. As for the opening of the coffin, I suppose one could do it oneself as far as that goes."

"I presume there would not be much difficulty. At the same time it will be as well to have a practical man. The first step I think will be to consult the Vicar."

"Exactly our idea. If we may rely on your help, I will go to him at once; but, from your relations with my cousin, you are as much interested as anyone, and I thought I would come to you first."

"Certainly I will do all in my power to assist you. You will not, of course, mention the matter to Miss Fane?"

"By no means; there is not the least necessity for telling her anything about it."

"Very well, then; I will see the Vicar at once."

Lord Burnham went on his way, and Bates returned to the morning-room. He found Vera alone.

"My dearest," he said, taking her hand, "I have hardly had a moment alone with you since this wonderful discovery. Let me first congratulate you, then I must talk to you about our future relations with each other."

"I do not see why they should be in any way different from what they are now. I don't wish them to be different."

"But you are going away from us to-morrow, at least for a time, and you are a much greater person than you were before," Bates added, smiling. "I am not at all sure, however, as far as my own feelings are concerned, that I should not have preferred your remaining as you were; but I cannot help seeing how greatly to your advantage it must be to have become the niece of a man like Lord Seagrove."

"I do not see the advantages beyond the fact that I like him and Lady Seagrove very much, and am glad to have found such kind relations. From a worldly point of view it makes no difference to me whatever."

"And you don't wish to be released from your engagement?"

"Released!" echoed Vera in astonishment. "How could I ever dream of such a thing?"

"My darling," said Bates, with a warmth unusual to him, "I felt that it was only right to offer to release you. I believed that you would meet me in the way you have. There is however another side to the question. Although he has not hinted at such a thing, it is possible that Lord Seagrove may before long entertain higher views for you. He becomes in a manner your guardian. I should at least have to ask his consent to our marriage!"

"His consent!"

"It would be but courteous. Of course, it is all so new and strange now that one hardly takes in the situation, but I shall feel bound to seek an opportunity of speaking to him about it."

"And if he objects, should you give me up?"

"That would depend on you."

"You know I should never leave you," she answered, laying her head upon his breast. "How could I? How could I?"

Bates held her closely in his arms. There was a pause of a few minutes, then she looked up.

"Oh, if I thought there was the barest chance of its separating us I should quite hate it all. In fact, now I am beginning to think I had rather it had not occurred."

"And you don't care a button for the great name, the position?"

"Not an atom. When I heard it I was only too glad to think that our engagement would prevent our being separated."

There was another pause, then Bates said rather more seriously:

"Vera, you tempt me to speak to you again on a subject which I promised not to mention for a time. You are going away from us. It will be a hard trial to me. We have become so accustomed to the sunshine of your dear presence that I don't like to fall into the shade again, but I could bear the parting better if you would give me some hope that I might claim you before very long. When may it be?"

In spite of herself a perceptible shade passed over Vera's face. She tried to control herself.

"You have been too patient with me," she said. "It shall not be so very long if you wish it very much."

"Wish it! You know too well what my feeling is about that. How my whole soul is devoted to you and every moment away from you is a time of pain. Will you say the end of the year?"

"That is a dismal time, is it not? I don't like to disappoint you, but early in the year would not make much difference, would it? It might be in the early spring."

"Then we might make it Valentine's Day. Did ever any man have a sweeter valentine? Shall it be that day?"

She still hesitated.

"I am a terrible trial to you, I am afraid," she said. "Give me to the end of the year?"

"But you won't change your mind?"

"There is no fear of that. I will faithfully promise to name a time before the end of the year."

"Very well. I will be satisfied with that." He stooped and kissed her. For the first time their lips met. "Is she beginning to love me for myself alone?" thought Bates.



## CHAPTER XLII.

## IN THE VAULT.

It was past eleven o'clock. The last gleam of daylight had long since died out in the western sky. Low clouds were driving up from the sea and a slight drizzling rain was beginning to fall.

Two figures were pacing slowly up and down the gravel path under the east window of the church at Kirkfield—Bates and the Vicar. There was a space of grass about ten feet wide between the wall of the church and the path, and a portion of this was enclosed by some high iron railings of a very substantial character.

Within this enclosure a flight of stone steps led down to a doorway in the foundation wall of the church. This doorway was of stout wood thickly studded with iron nails. It obviously led to a vault or crypt under the chancel of the church.

"It is a most astounding story," said the Vicar. "I don't wonder at their wishing to confirm it by actual inspection, or at their wishing to keep it a profound secret until they have proved it beyond all doubt."

"There will be some difficulty, will there not? The niche, as I am told, is hermetically closed."

"That is in accordance with present regulations. The old Lord Seagrove had an objection to leaden coffins, and quite properly; they are a horrible invention. But there will be no difficulty in removing the concrete and brickwork. A man is coming for the purpose."

"It is a ghastly business, especially at this time of night."

"It could not have done in the daytime. It would have been all over the place in an hour."

"I suppose so."

They paused opposite the gate in the iron railings.

"It is a curious custom—that of burial under the church. Are there many places like this?" asked Bates.

"Only a few belonging to some of the old families who have special privileges with regard to burial in these places. But they are fast dying out."

"I should think so. Burial in good wholesome earth must be a far more healthy method."

The Vicar paused a moment. "I think I hear wheels," he said.

"They must be coming."

They went towards the gate of the churchyard, which was guarded by a policeman. Presently four figures came into view. They proved to be Lord Seagrove and his son, followed by a workman with tools, and an undertaker.

"I hope we have not kept you waiting," said Lord Seagrove, as he



shook hands with the Vicar and Bates. "The fact is, much as I wish to carry this business through, my heart rather failed me at the last. It seems like desecration."

"But highly necessary under the circumstances," answered the Vicar.

"I quite agree with you, but we had better lose no time. Burnham, give me your arm."

The party advanced towards the enclosure beneath the window. Lord Burnham produced a key and unlocked the gate. They entered the enclosure and descended the steps.

"You have the other key, Vicar?" said Burnham, turning to the clergyman.

"Yes," the Vicar answered, producing it. "It has been left at the Vicarage ever since the last interment—I don't know why. It ought to have been in your possession."

"It has been overlooked, I suppose," replied Burnham, producing a match. "You will want some light. The man has candles for the vault. We need not light one here."

He struck a match. The small but bright light of the vesta lit up the doorway and the group around it with unusual vividness in the midst of the surrounding darkness. The key was inserted in the lock, but it required some effort to turn it. At length, however, the bolt flew back; the door however still refused to open, but at length yielded to the combined pressure of Bates and the workman.

The mephitic odour from the vault rushed out upon them, causing almost a feeling of faintness.

"Stand back a moment, my lord," said the undertaker. "Let the air get in."

They waited three or four minutes; then the undertaker advanced into the vault and lit a candle. The others entered also.

The sealed-up niches were around them—the last resting-places of a long line of Colbornes, each with its tablet attached bearing the name of the solitary occupant of the niche. It was a solemn sight and visibly impressed them all.

Attached to the niche the nearest the door on the right was the inscription they looked for:—

"THE LADY VERA COLBORNE,  
Only daughter of 6th Earl Seagrove.  
Died August 8th, 185—,  
Interred August 13th, 185—."

Lord Seagrove again seemed quite overcome; so much so that Bates and his son both supported him, one on each side.

"There is no necessity for you to remain here while the men are at work," said his son. "Let Mr. Bates and the Vicar take you outside. I will see to the work here."

He yielded to this suggestion. When he was in the fresh

air above he seemed to revive and walked up and down with comparative ease.

The rain had ceased, and a few stars were visible amidst the drifting clouds. The tower of the old church rose solemnly into the deep gloom above. Here and there a light gleamed from the distant houses of the town and the voices of some late revellers came to them in the lull of the wind. Away to the south-east, lights were twinkling around the estuary of the river, and at regular intervals the fierce light at the Needles flashed out like a crimson eye amid the impenetrable gloom. From the vault below came the sound of the workman's crowbar as he dislodged the brickwork from the front of the niche, while now and then a mysterious murmur fell upon their ears—the "enchanted moan" of the sea breaking upon the beach two miles away.

The three who were parading up and down on the gravel walk were impressed by the solemnity of the scene and hour and by the strange errand that had brought them there. They walked for some time in silence. At length the Vicar said:

"Have they been prepared for what they will see when the coffin is opened?"

"Mr. Cross, the undertaker's son, has. I can quite trust him. His father has buried the Colbornes for generations. We have told them the strange story. The man, who is one of my own people at Seagrove, will be asked to leave the vault when the lid is unfastened. We must remove that ourselves."

"I suppose there is no doubt of the truth of the story?" said the Vicar.

"Not the slightest in my opinion," answered Lord Seagrove. "We only want the confirmation of it."

Meanwhile the work in the vault was progressing. Brick after brick was removed together with the cement which bound them together in a compact mass. At length the coffin was visible.

Two trestles were standing in a corner of the vault. They were there for the purpose of placing the coffin upon in the case of an interment. While the man was loosening the last bricks, the undertaker brought them forward and placed them at the required distance apart in readiness for the coffin.

When all was ready for its removal Lord Burnham went up the steps.

"Mr. Bates, will you step down a moment?" he said.

Bates descended. As he did so, Burnham said:

"We want four to lift the coffin carefully."

They went into the vault. The coffin was slid slowly forward until only the narrow end rested on the ledge. Then the four lifted it and placed it on the trestles.

Lord Burnham spoke to the workman.

"Brown, step up and tell my father and the Vicar to come down. You remain outside to see that no one interrupts us."

"Yes, my lord."

The man disappeared, and the next moment Lord Seagrove and the Vicar entered the vault.

Then the undertaker produced a spanner, and with a few vigorous efforts began turning the screws. They were rusty with damp and age, and at first resisted his attempts. Bates and Lord Burnham relieved him at intervals, but the process was a slow one. The moments dragged heavily on—to the chief actors in this strange scene they seemed an eternity. At length the last screw was removed; but, as if nothing should be wanting to complete the solemnity of the scene, at this moment, with a deep reverberation which rang out over miles of silent country and seemed to echo in the very vault itself, the old church clock tolled out the midnight hour.

A sort of awe seemed to strike to the hearts of the group around the coffin. They gathered closely to it. All felt that the supreme moment was at hand, and that the truth or falsehood of the marvellous story was about to be laid bare.

Lord Seagrove stood motionless at the foot of the coffin. His son held one end of the lid, the undertaker the other. They looked at Lord Seagrove as if waiting for a signal.

With an almost imperceptible movement of his hand he signalled to them to remove the lid. They did so.

There beneath their bewildered eyes, but placid and peaceful as though she had died but yesterday, lay the form of Lady Vera Colborne!

*(To be concluded.)*



## WAYFARING TO HEAVEN.

"Since every man who lives is born to die,  
And none can boast sincere felicity,  
With equal mind, what happens, let us bear,  
Nor joy, nor grieve too much for things beyond our care.  
Like pilgrims to th' appointed place we tend,  
The world's an inn, and death the journey's end."

*Dryden.*—'Palamon and Arcite.'

THE above famous passage is perhaps the most familiar setting of this oft-recurring comparison of the world to an inn, in which immortal spirits lodge awhile on their journey heavenwards. "I depart from life as from an inn, not as from my home," said Cicero. "But what happens in the world?" asks Epictetus, with a beautiful elaboration of the idea. "As though a man journeying to his own country should pass by and rest at a fair inn, and the inn being a delight to him, should abide in it. Man, thou hast forgotten thy purpose: thy journeying was not to this, but through this. 'But this is pleasant.' And how many other inns are pleasant, and how many meadows? yet only so as that a man should pass through them."\*

The same thought forms one of the arguments in that consoling protest, from Soame Jenyns' writings, against the fear of death, on which Dr. Johnson made the comment, "These are sentiments, which, though not new, may be read with pleasure and profit in the thousandth repetition." If we consider death, says Jenyns, "as a passage to a more perfect state, or a remove only in an eternal succession of still improving states (for which we have the strongest reasons), it will then appear a new favour from the divine munificence; and a man must be as absurd to repine at dying, as a traveller would be who proposed to himself a delightful tour through various unknown countries, to lament that he cannot take up his residence at the first dirty inn which he baits at on the road."

A beautiful practical illustration of this pilgrim attitude towards the world was afforded by the pious Archbishop Leighton, as given by Bishop Burnet in his "Own Times." "He used often to say," relates Burnet, "that, if he were to choose a place to die in, it should be an inn—it looked like a pilgrim's going home, to whom all this world was as an inn, and who was weary of the noise and confusion in it. . . . And," adds the chronicler, "he obtained what he desired, for he died in Bull Inn, in Warwickshire Lane" [London].

The presumption of the old writers seems to have been in accordance with Plato's theory, that, as the world is not the end, so neither was it the beginning of our pilgrimage. In simpler percep-

\* Quoted by Lord Houghton as heading to his poem, 'The Inn.'

tions it is as a pilgrimage complete in itself, that this life is considered. Death is the last stage of that journey, which begins at birth. And by some the goal of Paradise is ever kept in view, now almost hidden by clouds and mists, now for one instant lighted up as by some distant gleam of sunset. So it appeared to quaint old Thomas Fuller, who, in a delightful parable presents the thought :

"Travelling on the plain, which, notwithstanding hath its risings and fallings, I discovered Salisbury steeple many miles off. Coming to a declivity, I lost the sight thereof; but climbing up to the next hill, the steeple grew out of the ground again. Yea, I often found it, and lost it, till at last I came safely to it, and took my lodging near it.

"It fareth thus with us, whilst we are wayfaring to heaven; mounted on the Pisgah-top of some good meditation, we get a glimpse of our celestial Canaan; but when either on the flat of an ordinary temper, or in the fall of some extraordinary temptation, we lose the view thereof. Thus in the sight of our soul heaven is discovered, covered, and recovered, till though late, at last, though slowly, we arrive at the haven of our happiness."

But what is the road to Paradise? The question was once asked of a bishop by some would-be wag, who thought perhaps to put his overseer in spiritual matters to the blush. But the divine was equal to the occasion. "Turn to the right," was his instant reply, "and keep straight on." There was a whole volume of sermons in the pithy direction. The old poet, Nicholas Breton, says very much the same, clothing the counsel in that full harmonious speech which was the heritage of the singers of his day :

"Think it not long to come to Heaven at last,  
Nor linger time to hinder happy speed;  
Fear not the sun, though skies be overcast,  
And let a candle stand the night in stead.  
So mark the light that lives in Virtue's eyes,  
And love shall lead thee straight to Paradise."

The passage occurs in his poem, "The Pilgrimage to Paradise," one of the predecessors of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," that supreme word-picture of man's pilgrimage to heaven.

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,  
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown,"

characteristically declared Cowper. So too James Shirley :

"We to Heaven  
Do climb, with loads upon our shoulders borne;  
Nor must we tread on roses, but on thorn"—

and Francis Quarles :

"Pilgrim, trudge on! What makes thy soul complain  
Crowns thy complaint. The way to rest is pain,  
The road to resolution lies by doubt—  
The next way home's the farthest way about."

But the path, though narrow, is not necessarily sad. There are children and childlike souls who, in Henry Vaughan's happy phrase, "by mere playing go to Heaven." Crashaw devotes an exquisite strain to

"A happy soul that all the way  
To Heaven hath a summer's day."

Indeed, as a Gaelic proverb quoted by Fiona Macleod declares, there are no less than three hundred and sixty-five hidden paths, each one of which may lead to lost Paradise. But, whether the way be sad or weary, whether we tread on roses or on thorns, whatever the vexations or distractions of the road, "only," in the words of brave old Samuel Rutherford, "let us not grow weary. The miles to that land are fewer and shorter than when we first believed. It is a rough way, but a fair home." And

"As for the trouble of the way—  
Which, dark or strait, cannot be long—  
Faith will enlarge—turn night to day—  
So we'll to Heaven go in a song."

It is perhaps at the beginning and end of the journey that the goal shines clearest on the vision. Though midway on life's pilgrimage the weary foot-sore traveller is occasionally refreshed with sudden startling perceptions of a light that belongs not to the sunshine, of a music that had not its origin in anything of earth. The youthful Coleridge dwells on these visions of faith,—

"Such delights  
As float to earth, permitted visitants,  
When in some hour of solemn jubilee  
The massy gates of Paradise are thrown  
Wide open, and forth come in fragments wild  
Sweet echoes of unearthly melodies,  
And odours snatched from beds of amaranth,  
And they that from the crystal river of life  
Spring up on freshened wing, ambrosial gales—  
The favoured good man in his lonely walk  
Perceives them, and his silent spirit drinks  
Strange bliss which he shall recognise in Heaven."

Of the same foretaste of heavenly joys the Quaker poet, Whittier, writes, in simpler but no less heartfelt words:

"So the o'erwearied pilgrim, as he fares  
Along life's summer waste, at times is fanned  
Even at noontide by the cool sweet airs  
Of a serener and a holier land."

As also Keble, with an even distincter perception:

"Is not the pilgrim's toil o'erpaid  
By the clear rill and balmy shade?  
And see we not up earth's dark glade  
The gate of Heaven uncloze?"

Sometimes in a dream-while, it almost seems as if one were actually and in very deed walking heavenward. So it seemed to Wordsworth as he walked with his sister by the shores of Loch Katrine, the scene all chill and dark behind, all radiant with celestial beauty ahead of them. So to Thoreau, in a November sunset he writes of, one of those hours which make of the fall in New England so divine a thing.

"It was such a light," he tells us, "as we could not have imagined a moment before, and the air also was so warm and serene that nothing was wanting to make a paradise of that meadow.

"We walked in so pure and bright a light, gilding the withered grass and leaves, so softly and serenely bright, I thought I had never bathed in such a golden flood, without a ripple or a murmur to it. The west side of every wood and rising ground gleamed like the boundary of Elysium, and the sun on our backs seemed like a gentle herdsman driving us home at evening.

"So we saunter toward the Holy Land, till one day the sun shall shine more brightly than ever he has done, shall perchance shine into our minds and hearts, and light up our whole lives with a great awakening light, as warm and serene and golden as on a bankside in autumn."\*

That most delightful of modern essayists, who writes under the signature of A. K. H. B., descanting on "the bonny, bonny banks of Loch Lomond," tells of a London banker, one not given to poetry of speech, who returning to his hotel at Tarbet from a walk by a road tending northward was asked where that road went. He paused; then replied solemnly, "I don't know; but I think it must go to Heaven!"

This feeling of almost conscious approach toward the haven of desire has been graphically expressed by Coventry Patmore:

"Nothing of my state I know  
But that t'ward Heaven I seem to go,  
As one who fondly landward hies  
Along a deck that seaward flies."

For it is as often under the similitude of a voyage that the pilgrimage is considered.

To this did Cicero compare it. And a divine of the seventeenth century, one Warwick, sturdily demands, "Why should not I, with a Christian resolution hold a steady course in all weathers? and though I be forced with cross-winds to shift the sails and catch at side-winds, yet skilfully to steer and keep on my course, by the Cape of Good Hope, till I arrive at the haven of eternal happiness." While the almost contemporary Saint Francis de Sales, of Geneva, reflects with his English brother, "When we arrive in port, the pleasures that await us will amply compensate for all the perils of the

\* *Essays*: "Walking."



voyage. Though the force of the tempest sometimes sent us astray, it was only in order to check us a little, and animate to greater exertions."

Cowper's humble, conscientious spirit shows in the lines :

"Bound on a voyage of awful length,  
And dangers little known,  
A stranger to superior strength,  
Man vainly trusts his own.

"But oars alone can ne'er prevail  
To reach the distant coast ;  
The breath of Heaven must swell the sail,  
Or all the toil is lost."

A Yankee poet, none the less a poet for being a humorist (S. W. Foss), considers life under this figure of a voyage from a point of view so racy and yet so touching that one is tempted to quote from it :

"W'en big vessels meet, they say,  
They saloot an' sail away.  
Jest the same are you an' me—  
Lonesome ships upon a sea,  
Each one sailing his own jog  
For a port beyond the fog—"

And he exhorts to a like interchange of friendly signals between these lovely human vessels that pass each other to and fro upon the seas of life—

"Let yer speakin'-trumpet blow ;  
Lift yer horn an' cry, 'Hullo !'"

Pursuing the voyage in imagination to the coasts of the unseen world, he fancies a renewal of the old familiar greeting :

"W'en ye leave yer house of clay,  
Wanderin' in the Far-Away,  
W'en you travel through the strange  
Country t'other side the range,  
Then the souls you've cheered will know  
Who ye be, an' say, 'Hullo !'"—

as homely a greeting as has ever been imagined to break upon the first dread stillness of Eternity.

One remembers hearing Mr. Edward Clifford relate, at a public meeting, how during his visit to the lepers at Molokai, he once sang to Father Damien, in his high turret-chamber overlooking the wide waters of the Pacific (those same waters on another shore of which Robert Louis Stevenson was at the same time dreeing his scarcely

less heroic weird, in exile, though he too was soon to be "home from sea") that old, old hymn of the church which tells of the perils of the voyage, and the bliss of landing on the heavenly coast :

" Safe home—safe home in port !  
Rent cordage, shatter'd deck—  
Torn sails, provisions short,  
And only not a wreck !  
But, oh, the joy upon the shore  
To tell our voyage perils o'er ! "

A joy to which Cowper in his happier moments looked forward, as is shown by one of his letters.

And as the voyage draws near its close, and the harbour-lights seem to glimmer dimly on the straining sight, how the heart begins to yearn for home ! " We read," says an almost forgotten writer, Townsend, " that in certain climates of the world, the gales that spring from the land carry a refreshing smell out to sea, and assure the watchful pilot that he is approaching to a desirable and fruitful coast, when as yet he cannot discern it with his eyes. And, to take up once more the comparison of life to a voyage, in like manner it fares with those who have steadily and religiously pursued the course which Heaven pointed out to them. We shall sometimes find by their conversation, towards the end of their days, that they are filled with hope, and peace, and joy, which, like those refreshing gales and reviving odours to the seamen, are breathed forth from Paradise upon their souls, and give them to understand with certainty that God is bringing them to the desired haven."

A state of blissful anticipation that has its counterpart in Bunyan's 'Land of Beulah,' where the outwearied pilgrims are permitted to rest for a brief while before crossing the dread river of death. Where the singing of birds is continually heard, and the flowers spring fresh every morning ; where the sun shineth day and night, and where the Shining Ones are wont to walk, seeing it is on the borders of Heaven. Where also the pilgrims are within sight of the city they are bound for, and beholding its glory, and the reflection of the sunbeams upon it, fall sick with desire.

But many a struggle and sorrow has to be gone through, many a snare and pitfall to be passed before this blessed stage of the pilgrimage is reached, if indeed it be not only a favoured few who ever do attain to it. With some it is rather the last little dragging bit just before the end which is the hardest darkest part of the whole pilgrimage. Happy they who have resolved with Shakespeare's saintly King Henry VI. :

" God shall be my hope,  
My stay, my guide, and lantern to my feet." \*

\* 2 Henry VI., II., 3.

Or who can even pray with Herrick :

"Can I not come to Thee, my God, for these  
So very many meeting hindrances  
That slack my pace, but yet not make me stay—  
Who slowly goes, rids in the end, his way?  
Clear thou my paths, or shorten thou my miles;  
Remove the bars, or lift me o'er the stiles—  
Since rough the way is, help me when I call,  
And take me up, or else prevent the fall.  
I ken my home, and it affords some ease  
To see far off the smoking villages"—

The "smoking villages!" What a homely image compared with the golden streets and jewelled gates and ceilings of the aspirations of some.

Thus, whether in joy or sorrow, whether in loneliness or with the beguiling companionship of friends, we advance, steadily, surely, inevitably, towards our destination. Some perhaps may find they have been on the right way without knowing it. Others, who were confident of being on the right track merely because it was narrow, may find they have strayed far from it into some delusive by-path, whence they can retrace their steps only with difficulty and pain. By some, the end of the journey is stumbled upon all of a minute.

"'Twas but one step for those victorious feet  
From their day's walk into the Golden Street"—

So Archbishop Alexander wrote of a young curate who died of a fever contracted in his work in Ireland, and whose memorial is in Derry Cathedral. Others reach it by such gradual stages that their course is run before they scarcely know it; and they are carried dreaming past the grave, and laid upon the lap of Heaven.

But on, on we must keep marching, "guests of the world, poor passengers that post," for ever on the move.

"Many a road, and many an inn;  
Room to roam, but only one home  
For all the world to win."

The first inn being childhood's home, and happy, in the views of some, are those who get no further. Their reckoning is so easy. Yet life is life, and adventure is adventure; and seeing that we may never pass this identical way again, every stage of it is full of interest. Though with many, even of those whose pilgrimage extends to its full limit, the first inn is likewise the last. But how dismantled of its charm! Ever and anon they look around, and miss an accustomed face, and then another, and another; till of the merry party they set out with there are at last but a few remaining. While the sunlight is withdrawing its beams; the birds' songs are hushing one by one; and the few frail pilgrims left of the original happy band

cling disconsolately to one another, each dreading to be the last left lonely on the way, as ever more and more wearily they cover the ground that separates them from those gone before. "How far we seem on our way to join them! How blessed the passage from this darkening lurid scene!" wrote Dean Stanley on the death of a loved one.

By none has the compelling, forward-moving spell of life's march been more powerfully described than by Hawthorne. He carries it on to the very boundary of the grave. "Onward, onward into that dimness where the lights of time which have blazed along the procession are flickering in their sockets! And whither? We know not, and Death, hitherto our leader, deserts us by the wayside, as the tramp of our innumerable footsteps passes beyond his sphere. He knows not more than we our destined goal, but God, who made us, knows, and will not leave us on our toilsome and doubtful march, either to wander in infinite uncertainty, or perish by the way."

But, as George Macdonald muses: "To pass through the valley of the shadow of death is the way home." And many look forward to that last step of the pilgrimage not only with no fear, but with delightful anticipation.

"I feel about all things now as I do about the things that happen in an hotel, after my trunk is packed to go home," wrote Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, toward the end of her pilgrimage, to George Eliot. "I may be vexed and annoyed . . . But what of it! I am going home soon." George Herbert had put the same thought into verse more than two centuries before, in his poem 'Home':

"What have I left that I should stay and groan?  
The most of me to Heaven is fled;  
My thoughts and joys are all packed up and gone,  
And for their old acquaintance plead"—

And on our arrival shall we not be met by friends, even as we are met by them on earth at the end of a journey. How sweet to think that the familiar helping hands will be stretched forth as of old to assist our first faltering steps, that the well-known hearty voices will sound their welcome in our ears. It was old General Moltke who wrote to his sister after such a meeting with his wife: "As Mary met me joyously at the railway station after the campaign in 1866, so I hope she will meet me above when the torture of this life is at last over. For that I often yearn with all my heart."\*

"There you shall enjoy your friends again that are gone thither before you," say the shining ones to Bunyan's pilgrims, when these had safely got over the river, and their talk is about the beauty and the glory of Heaven toward which they are ascending; "and there you shall with joy receive even every one that follows into the holy place after you."

P. W. ROOSE.

\* Quoted by Sidney Whitman in "Teuton Studies."

## THE BURIED TREASURE.

TALK of the unsettled life of an officer's wife! Why, it is vegetation itself when compared with the eternal peregrinations of an artist's luckless better half! I know at least that mine has no rest. And the worst of it all is that John—my husband—declares I enjoy it!

As if any woman *could* "enjoy" being precluded from buying such pretty things as in her ceaseless travels she may happen to see and fancy! And precluded by the crushing recollection of over-filled trunks and replete portmanteaus; to say nothing of the monthly flittings.

And what bargains could I not have got in all these months' wanderings over Italy had I not been shackled by that fatal remembrance! I think John must be aware of the fact, else why did he have that abominable Ulster (which, by the way, makes him the image of a magnified Esquimaux) sent over from Silver's just at the very time I was meditating the purchase of those lovely old damask hangings?

John is a landscape-painter, you must know, and does not care a rush for stuffs and old china. He calls them rags and pottery. He knows, or *will* know, nothing of *bric-a-brac*; I am almost as learned in painting as Mr. Alderman Dibble, who escorted his wife to Rome to have her portrait taken by one of the "old masters." Yet we don't get on badly, all things considered, though we *are* condemned to lodge in all kinds of wretched holes.

It is surprising what an enormous amount of discomfort is implied by the word "picturesque." At least to *my* mind. You would quite agree if you had had one-half of my experience. Could I hear of anyone writing a dictionary I would send him my definition: "Lumpy beds and skinny chickens." I never saw a picturesque spot that did not abound in both.

For the moment, however, we are a wee bit better off. Sestri Levante is a pretty place, and there are no hotels. We never go to hotels—nay, more, we shun them. Paying for a marble staircase, a jingling piano, aspedistras and candles you have never burned, doesn't suit—though John's last picture *did* sell for the good round sum of eighteen hun—— Well, well, I won't say—it might look boastful. So we always take lodgings and cook for ourselves. Gaetana has now been with us so long that she has quite ceased believing in Britons living exclusively upon raw beef and indigestible pudding.

Yes, on the whole, Sestri is a pretty place. An Italian would call it stupendous, a Frenchman ravishing, and a German heavenly; I, being simply English, repeat that it is pretty. And then there are

no "establishments" with the inevitable supercilious, pretentious, Who-are-you? visitors to crush the unhappy natives to the dust with their elaborate toilettes and unheard-of exigencies; to criticise and slander each other, and, in short, to make themselves ridiculous and the place unbearable. In Sestri you can go out in a cotton gown and Berlin gloves without risk of being sneered at.

If I could conjure out of my ink-bottle pictures such as John can out of his colour-box, I might give you some idea of Sestri Levante. But I cannot, so must content myself with telling you that it is a little town built upon the neck of an olive-clad peninsula, backed by spurs of the Apennines, fronted by the sweeping Gulf of Chiavari, and smiled upon by the bluest of skies.

Of course there is a monastery peeping out from the woods upon the promontory, and all the surrounding heights are strewn with white villas, which, in the sunshine, look like a soft scattered flock of newly-washed sheep wandering amid the verdure; aloes bristle and flower among the rocks, yuccas threaten from out the crevices, while orange and fig, pomegranate and vine spread a green wilderness around, sentinelled here and there by a solitary palm, a lonely cypress or a towering pine.

The streets, or rather the street—for there is but one worthy of the name—seems abandoned to gossiping women, screaming children and scratching hens. The male population is remarkable for absence; almost all the men being either sailors or fishers, and thus doomed to pass their lives in absence or sleep.

But in compensation, every second urchin is either a Garibaldi, a Paganini, a Fieschi or a Mazzini; and, as they are continually shrieking after each other, you have the advantage of their arousing in your mind recollections very different from the soft dreaminess breathed over you by the blue sky, the rippling water and the sun-steeped habitations around. We have a garden, or what is here called such, in which we pass most of our spare time in the peaceful companionship of a rabbit-hutch, an untold number of cats, and a Cochin China and his harem.

In parenthesis I may here remark that, were I asked to name the chief productions of Liguria, I should unhesitatingly answer, "priests and tabbies." I never saw such an abundance of either in any other locality.

Forgive the interruption, and let me return to our garden. It is a walled-in space, with an immense vine-clad trellis in the centre, under which one can sit in comfort during the hottest noon; a dozen fig and orange trees, and an old well which, on account of the children, is the terror of my Sestri existence, in spite of its ragged grey wall all tapestried over with moss and maidenhair ferns.

Naturally, no other spot is half so attractive to the darlings as that dreaded one, and they are quite content to spend hours in gazing over the low wall, down into the gloom below, wondering at their



own dear faces mirrored back by the dark water, and listening half frightened to the hollow sound of their own glad voices as they call down into the mysterious depths.

The old, black-eyed, white-haired woman, whose eternal occupation seemed to be drawing water, would seat herself upon that low stone wall and tell us tales of bygone days, of the time when she was a girl, and of the piece of gold Napoleon I. once gave her for showing him the nearest way up to the church of St. Anne.

"Where is St. Anne's?" I asked.

Catarina pointed to a ruin upon a cliff overhanging the sea on the opposite side of the little bay.

"That was St. Anne's, signora. The emperor had it blown up—God forgive him!—for he said it commanded the Genoa road beneath. Since that time it has never been rebuilt. Ah, when I was young, many a pleasant clamber have I had up yonder, high as it is!"

The old woman's eyes flashed out like black diamonds at the mere recollection.

"Ah, signora," she continued, "the world was quite different then! Summer was summer, and winter was winter; and with ten soldi one could buy what now you cannot get for twenty. Ah, the good old times!"

"Have you always lived in Sestri?"

"I was born in this house, and have never been farther than Chiavari. In my parents' time this was an inn, and we made a bit of money. But things went wrong later, and now I am obliged to serve under the roof where I once commanded."

"Poor woman!"

"Poor indeed! But did I ever tell you about the French officer who lodged here when I was a girl?"

"No; not that I remember?"

"I was not sure, for, you see, my head is not what it once was, and sometimes—— Well, no matter; he lodged here ever so long, and then one day he was suddenly called to Genoa. Alas, he never came back. He was shot in a tumult—for those were troublesome times, you know, and life was always in danger. Yes, they shot him—right through the heart, they say. God have him in glory!"

Her voice faltered; she drooped her head upon her breast, and when she raised it again there were tears in those terrible eyes of hers.

"We knew nothing of it till some time after; and then the French were driven away, and we heard no more about them. Nobody ever came to claim the things he left behind."

"Didn't you make inquiries?"

"And of whom?"

"Well, I don't know——"

"Ah, dear lady, we had other things to think about. Not but



that I would have given my heart's blood to have been sure that they laid him in holy earth. But I never could learn—and perhaps— And then there was nothing of value. A few old clothes and a book or two. The clothes have long gone; but I have the books yet. Would you like to see them?"

More to please Catarina and the children who had been listening open-mouthed, and who now chorused out, "Yes, yes!" than from any curiosity on my own part, I assented, and the old woman, with unusual alacrity, rose to fetch her relics.

But just at this moment, John came up to take us all out for a sail, and, much to Catarina's disappointment, we had to leave her, with the promise, however, of examining her treasure that same evening upon our return.

\* \* \* \* \*

We are early people, so at eight the next morning, we were already seated at breakfast, which meal we have always tried to render as English as possible, and which, in spite of all our endeavours, never gets beyond a parody of that pleasantest of gatherings.

What *can* you do with bread that won't toast, butter that melts in the heat, and no cold meat to speak of? As far as I am concerned, I would gladly give all the grapes and figs that ever grew, all the *salame* that was ever stuffed, all the saltless bread that ever was baked, for a pot of Scotch marmalade, a rasher of bacon, and a brown loaf.

The children had finished their bread and milk, and the post had come—five letters, of which one was for me, and the usual three-days-old *Times*. I poured out the tea—you can get excellent tea at Genoa if you choose to pay for it—and John helped me to some omelette. Outside we looked upon such a blaze of green and yellow as recalled vividly to my mind certain landscapes of a modern school (not my husband's, I beg to observe), and then both of us settled down to enjoy the good things spread before us. Nothing was heard but the occasional jingle of a teaspoon, the click of a fork, or the rustle of a page as it was turned.

"Another cup of tea, Martha, if you—— Why, what on earth's the matter?" cried John, interrupting himself, and gazing open-mouthed across the table with extended arm and teacup.

"Oh, my dear, such a letter!" Here I was obliged to pause and hunt for my handkerchief. "*Such* a letter!" I repeated. "Oh, that dreadful woman!"

"But who—who?"

"Marie de la Roche——"

"Marie de la Roche a dreadful woman? Why, you must be dreaming! She's about the sweetest girl I know, or ever knew."

"Yes, that she is! I don't mean her. It's all Helena's doing, and——"

"Now pray calm yourself. What is it all about?"

I handed him the letter, and while he was reading it had my little cry quietly out. It did me good, and I showed it by a most emphatic, "Odious woman! To treat a poor girl in such a manner!"

"Helena is certainly not a very pleasant person," said John, as he laid the letter down beside his plate and helped himself—for the third time—to omelette. I felt indignant at his being able to eat at all after learning the sad news. "Not at all pleasant, though she *is* your cousin and a countess to boot."

"Were she ten times my cousin and twenty times a countess—and, after all, she only married a Frenchman for his title, as he married her for her money—it would be all one. She is a wicked——"

"My dear!"

"Yes, wicked! I repeat it, John. After worrying the very life out of a poor girl reduced to go out as companion—and that for seven long years—she turns her out of doors, one may say. And why? Because she very properly refuses to accompany her countess-ship yachting all alone with half a dozen young men. Well, I wonder what the world is coming to! I wish I had never been the means of Marie's entering her house, I know."

"Well, she's out of it now; that's something. But what are you thinking of doing?"

"Why, having her here, to be sure! You see she says she would like to find a situation in Italy."

"Have her here by all means. And you know, Martha, you need not be in too great a hurry to find the situation."

"You're a dear good old John. I'll make you some fresh tea, and then write off at once."

Ten days later Marie de la Roche was our guest at Sestri.

She was a welcome addition to our little party, for John and I loved her as a daughter, and the children adored her. Everyone, indeed, had a kind word and smile for the gentle girl who, without a relation in the world, was so early left to battle with all the turbulent elements of everyday life.

She was a little too quiet for me, if the truth must be told; indeed, she seemed almost cowed. But that was not to be wondered at after so many years in Helena de la Volaille's house, the victim of caprices that in a poor woman would have been called "insanity," but in the rich one were only spoken of as "eccentricity."

There was one person, however, who from the very first moment seemed to take a dislike, as invincible as unaccountable, to Marie. That person was old Catarina. She would never even speak to her, but, at the same time, appeared to take a savage delight in silently glaring at her for half an hour at a time from under those thick shaggy eyebrows of hers.

"Why do you dislike the signorina?" I asked her one day.

"Who knows?"

And with this most dubious answer I was obliged to be satisfied.

But one grows used to all things in this wonderful world of ours, and so Marie at last got quite accustomed to discover Catarina's black orbs flashing out upon her from behind the orange boughs, or glaring forth through some half-open door. I can't say she exactly got to like it, but she certainly ceased either to be astonished at or to fear it.

John was out, the children were playing in the garden, Marie and myself in the sitting-room—she looking listlessly out of the window and over the broad blue sea which lay sparkling in the summer sunshine, I puzzling over my household books in the vain hope of finding some trace of seven francs and a half, for which I could not, for the life of me, manage to account. Happening to look up in the course of my mental wrestlings, I saw that large tears were trickling down my friend's cheeks, and that she was quietly slipping away into one of those silently desponding moods so dangerous to young persons of her age and sex.

"What *is* the matter, my dear?" I cried, laying down my pen.

She started, tried to smile, but only succeeded in making the tears flow faster. I rose, crossed to the window, put my arm round her waist, and spoke such words of consolation as were possible in my ignorance of the cause of her grief. Gradually the beautiful head drooped to my shoulder, and words came—timidly, unconnectedly at first, then more freely, till at length the whole tale was poured forth. It was just the old story. She was engaged to a young naval officer as penniless as herself, and there was little or no hope of their being able to marry for years and years to come.

What could I say? Words would only bring poor comfort and no sort of remedy. How I wished for some of Helena's money at that moment! A few thousands would have made two young people happy for life; and, for the want of them, how many long and weary years would they not have to drag through!

Ah, if rich people would only reflect upon all the happiness they have it in their power to bestow!

"Come, Marie, cheer up! You must not give way; you ought to occupy yourself. Have you nothing to read?"

She shook her head.

"There are some books on a shelf in my room. Go and look if you can find anything."

She went. I returned to my day-book, and was just in the agonies of adding up an endless column of crabbed figures, when an exclamation from Marie dispersed my ideas as a kite's shriek scatters chickens, and made me start up with a "What is it, Marie?"

"Oh, Mrs. Middleton, where *did* you get this from?" And as she came out of my room she held out an old volume towards me.

With eager curiosity on every feature and excitement in her eyes, she was quite another being from the patient, sad-looking

girl of a few moments before. I assure you I relished the change exceedingly.

"That is one of the old books Catarina brought in to show us one day, and——"

"But the name—the name?"

"Yes, I remember reading a name upon the fly-leaf of one of them. But what of that?"

"Look! Charles de Gironcourt! My mother was a de Gironcourt. How did Catarina come by the books?"

I related the story.

"This Charles de Gironcourt," said she, pointing to the name written in pale reddish ink upon the yellow leaf—"this officer then was my great uncle. I know he was killed in a riot at Genoa—mamma sometimes spoke of him. How very strange that I should come to Italy and meet with such a relic!"

"My dear, life is full of odd things, only we don't always see them. Your family——"

"I am the last of them. I have nobody either on my father or mother's side."

"You have friends at any rate, dear," said I, taking her hand, for the tone of her voice went to my heart.

We sat down, and Marie continued to turn over the leaves thoughtfully, as if seeking other traces of her lost relative. She stopped at a page covered with annotations in microscopic characters and which I supposed she was trying to read, for I said: "Go nearer the light, dear; you'll spoil your eyes."

"No, it is not that," she replied. "Look here—there are two pages pasted together."

And so there were.

"Who knows what may be written within? Oh, Mrs. Middleton, let me get some water!"

But as we passed the window on our way Marie held up the double page to the light.

"Oh, look, look! There is a paper inside! I see it quite plainly. What can——"

A hand, swift but determined, snatched the book from her grasp. Marie turned with a faint cry, and found herself face to face with Catarina.

"The book is mine, signorina, and you have no business to touch it."

"Catarina!"

"Si, signora. I repeat that the signorina has no business to touch it."

"But why?"

"Why? I will tell you." And, as she passed me to leave the room, she whispered into my ear: "I hate her!"

You can imagine how all this business disturbed the quiet of our

uneventful little household. What with our own experience, the repetition of the whole to John the moment he came in, the exclamations of the children, and the dogged refusal of the old witch to give up what she resentfully persisted in calling her property, we gradually worked ourselves up to a state of excitement such as to upset, for the moment, all our daily habits and entirely take away our appetites. The latter circumstance, however, was, for this once, a piece of luck, for at four we sat down to a dinner which ought to have been eaten at two.

All Sestri knew that Catarina was not exactly right in her head; but no one had ever dreamed of an outbreak such as the present. John tried threats and promises with the unhappy creature, but all to no purpose. The book was hers, the book she had, and the book she would keep.

"But the signorina has a right to it. Don't you understand that she is a relation of the lieutenant's?"

"I know she is," retorted Catarina angrily, "and that's just why I hate her!"

"You *know* she is?" we repeated in chorus.

"Yes, I know she is."

"But how?"

"How?" And here her wrath exploded, while her voice rose to a hoarse shriek. "Do you then think I have forgotten *him*? She's his very image!" Then her anger seemed suddenly to fall, and she at once encased herself in an armour of silence that nothing was able to penetrate.

An hour later, as I was passing the door of her room, I heard her sobbing as if her heart were breaking.

"It is the only thing to be done," I remarked.

"But is it justifiable?" said Marie.

"Of course it is."

"Well, Martha, perhaps in this case——"

"Now, John, you know I am right," I interrupted. "How it's to be done is another matter. We must begin by telling the landlady."

"But wouldn't the law——"

"The law! My dear Marie! I see you know nothing of Italian law. Why, ages before anything was done, Catarina would have burned the book or flung it into the sea. She doesn't care about the thing itself—she is only determined you shall not have it."

"Good heavens, she may already have destroyed it!"

"I don't think so; but be sure she has hidden it carefully."

We were sitting, a council of three, upon the vine-wreathed balcony discussing the ways and means of once more getting possession of the luckless volume. A shower had fallen, and a pleasant smell of warm, damp earth was mingled with the perfume of the lemon blossoms. The sea looked like a sheet of oil, and not a

leaf stired. Plan after plan was broached, only to be banished; and, of course, the more excited we got, the less feasible grew our ideas. Had one of us proposed drugging the old wretch with morphine and ransacking her room while she slept, I don't think we should have been very much startled.

"If she would only go out for an hour or so some fine day!"

"My dear, she hasn't set foot off the premises for the last ten years. She told me so herself not a week ago."

Chance did for us what we were unable to do for ourselves. One day Catarina slipped upon the garden step, fell, and broke her hip. The doctors refused to undertake her case unless she were brought to the hospital; so the poor old woman was carried off there and then, and we were left masters of the field.

I felt terribly like a thief as I stood beside the landlady in that poor little room and watched her open the drawers in which Catarina used to keep her goods and chattels. I had stolen a march, too, upon Marie and John; they had not the least idea of what I was about.

"Where *can* she have put it?" I whispered.

The woman who had taken Catarina's place and stood by me turned and, laughing, asked, "Why do you speak low? The hospital is far enough off! How the old woman would rage if she could only see what we are about!"

That *was* an all-sufficient punishment; and I accepted it as such.

"Nothing! nothing!" I exclaimed as the contents of the last drawer were turned out.

"Oh, I've not done yet, signora. Let us try the bed."

And, flinging off the clothes and mattress, she plunged her arms elbow-deep into the ticking filled with dried maize husks. A rustling like that of a legion of mice ensued, and made me think of Archbishop Hatto and the tower at Bingen. But that was all—nothing was brought to light.

I felt dreadfully disappointed, for I had anticipated a triumphant entry into the room where Marie and John were sitting, the book in my hand, superiority on my lip. Besides being really grieved on Marie's account, I was stupidly mortified on my own.

High and low we looked—but fruitlessly; no book was there, and every corner had been searched.

We turned to leave the room, and in doing so my eye caught an old stuff dress hanging up behind the door. The landlady followed my glance and, setting down the lamp, at once proceeded to investigate the garment.

"Is that it?" she cried, holding up a small discoloured volume.

I sprang forward, seized it and uttered a cry of triumph. The cry was echoed from the corridor.

"Oh, you wicked woman!" exclaimed John laughing, as, followed by Marie, he entered the room.



Eagerly we bent over the scrap of paper which patience and hot water had rescued from its prison house. This is what we read :—

*Under the third arch in right line from the saint's left foot.*

"Well," said John, half laughing, half vexed, "it was hardly worth the trouble."

"Who knows, my dear?" said I. "I say it is quite worth the trouble. There must be serious meaning hidden in those few words, else why should the poor fellow have taken such pains to hide a scrap of paper like that? Don't you think so, Marie?"

"I do indeed, Mrs. Middleton."

Then, leaning her head upon her hand, she fell into silent contemplation of the tiny sheet lying before her.

"Depend upon it, the indication is of importance," I whispered to John.

"Perhaps so. But how are we to discover the clue?"

"Yes, there's the difficulty. If it were in any other country—but here in Italy where arches and saints meet you at every turn!"

"Who knows, even, that the words refer to anything in Italy?"

"Let me look at the paper for a moment, Marie."

I took it and held it up before the lamp.

Three letters, OVA, in watermark were distinctly visible in one corner. I showed them to my companions. They both stared, and John said, "My dear, have you been studying to become a detective?"

"No, but—" I reddened—"I have been reading a French novel, and——"

"Oh, that's it, is it? Well, it's an ill wind that blows nobody good. Of course those letters mean *Genova*."

"Of course they do."

"The clue is still a very slight one."

"Granted. But still it *is* a clue."

"What do you say, Marie?"

"I was trying to recall all that poor mamma ever told me about her Uncle Charles. I know he had distant Italian relations, and I have some dim remembrance of an inheritance that either *did* or was to come to him from a maternal aunt at Florence. But I am sure of nothing; I thought it of so little consequence to——"

"My dear Marie, nothing is of little consequence in this wicked world."

And here, I suppose, I got prosy, or as John says, began to "speak like a book." For shortly afterwards my companions, saying it was late, rose and retired to bed.

I could not have slept if my very life had depended upon it; so, after going to take a peep at the children, I returned to the sitting room and, crossing over to the open window, looked out. The moon was high, and it was almost as light as day.



"I'll go down into the garden for half-an-hour," I thought, "it will be cooler there."

So I went, and comfortably reclining in an American chair under the trellis, and with my back to the obnoxious well, I set about trying to hammer out some possible solution of the mystery which, for the moment, I must confess, engrossed my whole mind. But I could make nothing of it; the longer I thought it over, the more confused I grew.

I was irritated, too, at the intolerable apathy of Marie; she had not the energy of a fly; I suppose Helena had nagged it all out of her. I could have shaken the girl; she was so like pineapple jam, all too sweet!

I was painfully wide awake, and yet dying with sleep at the same time; in short—well, I cannot exactly tell you how I was; I only wish you clearly to understand that what follows was no dream.

The moonlight fell in chequers through the thick vine leaves, and all was silent around. Not a voice from sea or land—the sleep of death seemed to weigh upon all save myself. Suddenly a shiver came over me in spite of the heat, and, at the same time, an unknown but irresistible power made me turn my head towards the old well.

The sight there made me start up in amaze, as well it might; for there upon the low stone wall sat Catarina, as I had seen her times out of number, her gleaming eyes fixed full upon me, but with a less stern expression in them than they were wont to wear.

"Catarina!" I exclaimed, making a step forward, "you here? And your leg then——?"

No reply came, but she slowly raised her right arm and pointed across the bay to the dark rocks, upon whose summit stood the ruins of the old church steeped in the glistening moonlight.

Instinctively I followed her gesture, and then, when I turned again to question her, she was gone. I stood alone in the silent garden with the chequered light falling in a silent shower around me.

"Catarina, what is the meaning of this? Are you——"

But I waited for no answer, for a sudden and terrible fear fell upon me, bathing my brow with dew, and parching my tongue as with ashes. Trembling in every limb, I rushed into the house and up to John's room.

The following morning there was an early knock at our door.

"Who is there?" cried my husband.

"I," responded the landlady from without. "I only came to tell you that poor Catarina is dead; she died last night at the hospital. The doctors say it was the heart."

It was many days before I was quite myself again. John would have packed up and been off at once, but I would not hear of it. He had his picture to finish, and then, to tell the truth, I still secretly

hoped for some solution to the mystery dimly shadowed forth by that tiny scrap of mildewed paper.

We made numberless excursions, however, by sea and land, and visited many scenes of such loveliness as, I must confess, are rarely to be found out of Italy.

"To-morrow we are going to picnic it," cried John one day, "so get everything ready."

"And where?"

"Up to St. Anne's. The view must be magnificent; they say you can see Corsica on a fine day. But I warn you, you will find nothing but fuel and water up there. So, Martha, look sharp, and mind you don't forget the salt."

Before noon the next day we reached St. Anne's safe and sound, and sat down in the shade to rest and gaze in delighted wonder at the marvellous prospect unrolled before us.

A couple of hundred feet below lay the blue sea with but the road between the slumbering water and the base of the dark, frowning precipice upon whose summit we were perched—to the left Sestri with its lovely peninsula, to the right the long sweep of the Gulf of Chiavari with its stretch of broad beach and scattered dwellings, while behind us rose the pine-clad hills, higher and higher, till, melting in the azure distance, they merged into the stern sterility of the rocky Apennines.

Of the church but the outward walls were standing, and the enclosed space was half choked with rubbish, here and there thickly overgrown with weeds and brambles. Roof there was none, and the tower too was utterly dismantled.

Bonaparte's orders had been well executed.

After wandering about for a while, Marie and John sat down once more, and I re-entered the building to have another look before going to superintend Gaetana's arrangements for dinner.

Here and there lay fragments of marble, while traces of frescoes yet remained upon the walls; but all was desolation and ruin, and I turned to quit a place which, I felt sure, was a harbour for snakes and all kinds of unclean beasts.

A shadow glided over the grass at my feet. I gazed upwards and saw a large eagle soaring overhead; and whilst I was trying to recall Schiller's lines upon a similar sight, the bird gave a hoarse shriek that seemed like a menace from out the blue depths and sailed swiftly onwards out of sight.

But that upward gaze of mine caused my eyes to light upon something that made my heart give a sudden leap, and sent my blood tingling to my fingers' ends. High up in the wall, just below where the eaves once rested, three shallow arches traced in the brickwork were faintly visible: and in a niche over the third arch was a small time-worn figure of St. Anne, without her head, and with her left foot a little forward.

"John! John!" I cried, "come here! Marie, make haste!"

At my cry they started up to see me standing, as my husband afterwards declared, like one half demented, with staring eyes, open mouth, and hand pointing upwards.

"What is it, Martha?"

"Look—look—three arches! and the saint's left foot!"

With one bound John was outside to return, breathless, with his glass. Nothing was clearly to be made out—wind and weather had done their work—but fragments of frescoes were evident, and that was quite enough for me in my sanguine excitement.

"By the beard of St. Anthony—if he wore one!" cried John in eager tones, using strong language in his excitement; "it must be the very spot. The whole arch is so narrow that to dig——"

He broke off to examine the ground. Fragments of stone and mortar with a fair share of bramble, as his poor hands testified.

How we dined that day I never knew. I doubt any of us being quite clearly aware of what we were eating. And the proof of it is that, though the salt had not been forgotten, the mustard had been left behind without anybody's ever being a bit the wiser.

Nor did any of us pass a very quiet night, I believe. I know that I, for my part, lay wide awake listening to every boom of the deep-toned church clock, till the appointed time should strike, and we could rise and set out upon our second visit to St. Anne's. We left the house at eight, telling no one of our design, of course, and walked quietly through the unheeding town in the direction of the Spezia road. Had those indifferent-looking men and women we passed been able to guess our errand, what a procession we should have had behind us!

But we got clear into the country, bought a hoe and spade at a neighbouring farm—they cost dear enough, and the man who sold them evidently thought us cracked till he discovered we were English, when he at once set us down as mad altogether—and then commenced the ascent of the cliffs.

I never saw John in such a state of excitement as, in shirt sleeves and breathless, he laboured away with hoe and spade alternately. Hard work it really was, for time and rain had consolidated the broken stone and earth into a compact mass which it required no little strength and energy to break up.

And what was all this labour and excitement to end in? Were we to discover anything, or return home sheepy and ashamed, leaving behind us all our wild hopes and the luckless tools for which we had paid the value six times over?

At every stroke my confidence grew less. I began to find Marie's phlegm rather enviable than otherwise. But John never flagged. As the minutes passed and nothing came to light but broken bricks and the most monstrous earthworms I ever laid eyes on, I began

to feel quite sick at heart, and my disappointment tinged itself with irritation.

"How slow you are, John! And you, Marie, how *can* you stand and look on in that calm, cold-blooded fashion?"

Marie was a dear sweet creature, but oh, so terribly undemonstrative! To this day I cannot guess how she ever contrived to rebel against my cranky cousin's fiat. John rested upon his spade and put me in mind of the grave-digger in 'Hamlet.' Then he borrowed my handkerchief to wipe his steaming brow.

"My dear, you surely did not expect that the first shovelful should turn out a potful of gold, did you?"

I am not sure, for that matter, but I did. However, I was spared the mortification of answering, by John's setting to work anew, sending earth and stones flying upon all sides, and making the old ruin ring as it had not rung for many a long day.

The sunlight poured broadly down, the white and yellow butterflies floated idly in and out, all Nature smiled softly around. Only in our three human hearts passion and perplexity held sway.

"John, you'll kill yourself working in that fashion!" I cried.

"My dear, what *am* I to do? A moment ago you grumbled at my being slow——"

"Well, so I did, dear; forgive me. I feel so horribly excited. Do you think we shall find anything?"

"Arches are terribly plentiful in this country, and——"

A vigorous stroke finished the phrase, and then, with a loud exclamation, John flung away the spade and plunged down into an attitude more energetic than elegant. He actually commenced grubbing.

Marie and I closed around him. Another exclamation, and then an oblong leaden box was wrenched out of its bed and flung upon the brink of the hole. We gazed blankly at each other, just as if we had not expressly come to look for a something that, most unaccountably, had really turned up.

Success cloyed us, and it was only in gazing at the object before us that we actually realised what a flimsy foundation our hopes had been built upon.

"Open it—do open it, dear Mr. Middleton!"

For the first time Marie showed outward excitement. Perhaps the remembrance of a certain lieutenant was not alien to her agitation.

"Come, be quick, there's a dear fellow!"

But no! my tiresome husband only coolly mopped his forehead with my Scotch cambric and smiling up at us, said:

"No, daughters of Eve, not here, but at home. Now stand aside and let me fill in the hole again."

The operation seemed endless, but it was at last accomplished. Then hoe and shovel were flung into a clump of aloes, and off we set for Sestri, our hearts beating high with curious expectation, and John

carrying the unearthed treasure carefully swathed in his red silk handkerchief.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was a solemn moment in which my husband's chisel began silently to sever the yielding lead. Even his hand trembled, and Marie leaned across the table with flushed cheeks and parted lips.

I cannot tell you how I felt; but I perfectly remember the same shiver coming over me as on that terrible night in the garden, and I drew closer to my husband and glanced nervously round, half expecting to see Catarina's fierce eyes glaring out upon us from some corner or other. But nothing was there save the golden sunshine and the flickering shadows flung by the vine-wreaths upon the balcony without.

Off came the lid, exposing to view a second cover of wood.

John attacked it with feverish eagerness, and the next moment drew out a thick parchment packet, corded and sealed, and upon which we read:

"CHARLES DE GIRONCOURT,

"May 10, 1812."

There we sat, a second council of three, intent upon solving the knotty problem.

"The law——" resumed John.

"The law!" interrupted I. "My dear, who cares a jot for the law, especially in this blessed land? If law were justice I shouldn't object, but as they differ so wonderfully——"

I stopped for I felt my temper rising. The word law always riles me.

"But allow me to explain, Martha. The law here declares that treasure-trove is to be shared equally by government, the lord of the soil and the finder; so that you see——"

"I don't see anything to do with the present case. The money and jewels were the property of Marie's uncle—he was not even an Italian—and naturally Marie, as his only living descendant, inherits that money and those jewels. The thing is as clear as daylight."

"Well, it's something his not having been an Italian."

"Something! Why, it's everything! If it isn't law, it's justice, at any rate."

I fear my logic was not infallible, now that I think it over.

"All very well, my dear. Yet I am not sure if we are justified——"

"Fiddle-sticks! Justice or not, there is no question of division. The whole is Marie's, and have it she shall!"

The girl pressed my hand warmly.

"Now *do* speak up in your own defence," I cried tartly. "*Do* help me to open the eyes of this obstinate man."

I was shockingly put out, and could have shaken Marie and called

her a soulless goose with pleasure. People can be so quietly aggravating at times.

Well, the discussion went on, Heaven knows how long; but it happily ended by the total defeat of John Middleton, and by Marie de la Roche's being put in possession of the treasure to which so undoubtedly she had every right.

It amounted, according to the written estimate found in the box, to three hundred thousand francs, or twelve thousand pounds, English money.

I should like to know how much of it would ever have been hers, and *when she would have got it*, had John's quixotic idea been put into execution? But I don't believe he ever was really serious. The law is a regular octopus, and never relaxes where it has once grasped.

That very day Marie wrote an endless letter to Lieutenant de Villeneuve. I hope she was more expansive with her pen than with her tongue. But I have no doubt she was; silent people generally revel in ink.

From a paper in the box we learned that the treasure was the inheritance left Charles de Gironcourt by his Florentine aunt. Not having at the moment any other means of securing its safety, he had buried it in the ruins, hoping later to find an opportunity of conveying it to France. Death stepped in and defeated his plan, and had it not been for that half-crazed old woman's having preserved the book, the treasure would, in all like ihood, still be lying amid the ruins of St. Anne's.

What I really *did* see in the garden I cannot explain. I have my own thoughts upon the matter, and leave you, dear reader, to have yours.

Last week Marie de la Roche and Albert de Villeneuve were married at Genoa.

I could fling neither slipper nor rice after them as they started on their wedding-tour, for they left by rail, and I was not going to make a spectacle of myself at the station. But, as the train slowly crept out from under the glass dome, the young couple were accompanied by the sincerest wishes for their health and happiness on the part of their sympathising friend, Martha Middleton.

A. BERESFORD.



## AN IDOL TEMPLE.

THE ground is strewn with broken images—  
 Fragments of bygone beauty bruise my feet ;  
 And through the clay and straw and dismal waste  
 Glimmerings of gems and gold my glances meet.  
 "Are the gems false," I ask—"the gold flowers base?"—  
 Remembering when the dust e'en wore a grace—  
 And then in tearful shame I hide my face.

For once the images were gods, indeed,  
 Set up within the temple of my heart,  
 To whom I paid undoubting fealty,  
 Looking to them to play a god-like part.  
 And, when they failed in this, still, wilfully  
 Shutting my dazzled eyes, I would not see,  
 And with closed ears would turn away from those  
 Lightly who mocked at my credulity.  
 So for a time ; and then the glamour pass'd,  
 And my cleared vision saw the truth at last—

The sad, sad truth that makes the bosom ache—  
 Dark seem the days, and dull each gayest scene—  
 The cruel truth which strives to crush the joy  
 Even from out glad things that once have been—  
 The truth than which the illusion were more blest ;  
 Its glowing movement than this dreary rest.

Ah, dear illusion ! come again and cheer  
 My languid soul !  
 Let the bright mirage rise before my eyes  
 As erst, and onward roll  
 With the sweet hours, that give no hint of all  
 The grief in store,  
 When the dreams vanish, and we wake to find  
 Them dreams and nothing more.

Shine out, ye golden heads and deep gray eyes—  
 Wise lips that speak a thousand mysteries,  
 Calm brows and skilful hands and fearless feet,  
 And all the graces which harmonious meet  
 And blend to form perfection half divine,  
 And I will bow before each phantom shrine.

Ah, me ! the fairy scene appears once more,  
 Beauteous as when, at touch of Fancy's wand,  
 It first awoke to life and took fair shape,  
 Moulded in loving reverence by her hand.  
 The colours and the light return again,  
 And to my heart returns the pleasant pain,  
 The tears, the rapture, and the longing vain.



The longing for what cannot be attained,  
Suffering which comes from unfulfilled desire—  
The joy that sense of love and beauty gives,  
Fears which torment all spirits that aspire—  
Vague fears of many ills that ne'er shall be.  
No fear of the one ill I cannot flee—  
The death of all this brilliant imagery.

Spring leaves are fluttering round the sacred fane,  
Spring's fitful sunshine gilds each pictured pane;  
The opening blossoms scent the air around,  
And earth is full of spring-time's life and sound.

The temple glows  
With radiant colours caught from rising day;  
The marble walls flush with soft crimson light,  
And downward flows  
The rosy splendour on to floors snow-white,  
Cool and untrampled yet in this morn's early ray.

And now from out the brightness comes a smile,  
Tender as moonlight on a tranquil lake;  
Kind eyes, whose kindness will not fade with time,  
Look into mine as first my own awake.  
How she who owns those eyes found passage straight  
Under the hallowed roof, I cannot say;  
She must have entered while I slept, and watched  
Over me till the lingering break of day.

That first fair goddess never shall be cast  
Shattered among her fellows on the earth;  
Disrobed of royal purple, she may prove  
Plainly of no august Olympian birth—  
A woman only, but a woman still,  
Who roves within the sanctuary at will.

Another face is beaming from afar,  
Almost disdainful in its youthful pride;  
And e'en the pride is noble in my sight,  
And I forgive the glance that turns aside,  
Careless or scornful of the earnest gaze  
That follows still, and offers without stint  
Its silent gift of praise.

Mild spring has melted into summer's heat,  
Noonday has changed morn's ruby tints to gold;  
And all his glory blazes on a form,  
Daintily cast in Nature's softest mould,  
That on a silken dais lies at ease,  
Heedless of all the world that passes by.  
And still I call the indifference, self-control;  
E'en the luxuriousness, serenity.

Ah, baby-idol, I could never find  
Words fitted to express my love for you;  
Remain a guileless child through all your days,  
Then will your faithful slave be ever true.  
Let not the dimpled cheeks grow pale and thin,  
The trusting eyes suspicious meaning win;  
Keep the unspotted soul still pure from stain of sin.

Another and another face appears ;  
One after one grand figures take their place  
Upon the thrones of ivory reared for them  
Within the glittering Temple's ample space.  
And every form is clothed in majesty,  
And every face looks down a god on me ;  
And, as of old, I stand in awe, and worship silently.

The dream is over, and I wake to find  
Evening's low sky one sheet of leaden gray ;  
Keen winds of autumn chill my hands and feet—  
Shuddering, I watch the coming close of day.  
No light is shining in the Temple now,  
And hopes and idols lie together low.

And shall the Temple without gods remain,  
Save for the mournful relics on its floor ?  
Shall never sunshine gild these walls again—  
The altar-fires be quenched for evermore ?  
Is every warm emotion stilled for aye ?  
Will no bright gleam yet pierce the cloudy west ?  
Shall autumn sob away its life in gloom,  
And I await the end in hateful rest ?

Perhaps the images were, after all,  
Types only of some higher loveliness,  
Veiled in the eternal heavens from sight of those  
Content with earthly shows and blessedness.  
Haply that beauty now may be revealed  
E'en in th' deserted Temple, on its loftiest throne,  
And a glad wealth of sunshine flood the place,  
Purer than that which late upon it shone.  
The mocking shadow all has passed me by :  
God grant I find the substance ere I die !

EMMA RHODES.



## A MYSTERY OF MEMORY.

THE interesting paper on "Psychic Recognition," appearing in the ARGOSY for October, prompts me to record a very singular instance of something similar, though still more inexplicable, in which I was once concerned.

I must begin my story at its beginning, which dates when I was a little schoolgirl.

One day I noticed in the newspaper an item from Australia, recounting that the editor of a newspaper there had received a smart horsewhipping at the hands of one Madame "Lola Montez," who considered that he had written too freely about her, she being at that time performing on the Colonial stage. The name conveyed absolutely nothing to my young mind. I cannot remember that I had ever seen it before, and from the context, it struck me only as that of an actress. I do not remember in what part of Australia the incident happened, nor whether even the name of the horsewhipped editor was mentioned or not. It is hard to understand how the incident could have been in my memory at all.

Some years later I heard the name of "Lola Montez" again, and then learned something of her history. Certain friends of mine, distinguished in literature and art, told me that some hangings in their house had formed part of her effects when she had fled from the popular fury which closed her unhappy sovereignty in Bavaria. But my friends had known her history in its earlier stages, and were persuaded that she had once been more sinned against than sinning, and that her earlier endeavours had been for an honourable livelihood. They had been in Dublin when, as a beautiful and clever girl, she had been hissed off the stage by the clique of a young nobleman, whose dishonourable courtesies she had repelled. If I remember rightly they themselves—or, at any rate, friends of theirs—had seen her, bathed in tears, as she retired, defeated, behind the scenes.

"She had made an effort," they said. "There was something good in her, they felt sure, and God's judgment might not be wholly as that of her fellow-creatures." (In the end, her quiet closing years, and the words of penitence and deep humility which she desired should be inscribed on her grave, went far to justify their charitable hopes.)

All this has nothing to do with my story, save that I desire to show exactly how often and in what way this woman's name ever came under my notice. I may add that, at the time of my friends' showing me the Bavarian hangings, I do not remember recalling the

horsewhipping incident. I may have done so, or I may not. Memory is a blank on this head.

More years passed by. My quiet girlhood had ended in a strenuous and responsible womanhood, brimful of interests and excitements.

One day I accepted an invitation to an informal dinner-party in a well-known "literary house" in the suburbs of London. I had little idea of the other guests, beyond knowing that one generally met interesting people there.

At the suburban railway station I encountered the brother of my host, a gentleman who has since attained great distinction in his profession. He did not live in London, but in a remote part of the kingdom. I had met him two or three times before on casual social occasions. We had just sufficient acquaintance to recognise each other, and we walked up to the house together, exchanging a few commonplace courtesies. I don't suppose he knew much more than I did, as to who were to be the other visitors.

At the dinner-table, this gentleman, my host's brother, whom we will call Mr. X., did not appear. It seemed that one or two of the other visitors had sent messages delaying their appearance till a later hour, and that consequently the number at table fell to the ominous thirteen, which it was felt would shock the superstitious prejudices of an Italian Contessa of the party. Consequently Mr. X. withdrew, to reduce the number to twelve. He ate his dinner in private, and only appeared again, in the drawing-room, with the later arrivals.

Among these was a tall dark gentleman, who was introduced to me in such a way that I barely caught his name, and was rather left to infer that he was a certain author—we will call him "Mr. Z."—then just coming before the public with writings which led most of his readers to infer he was a clergyman or a doctor thoroughly conversant with lower class English life. I myself half thought he was a curate, but I chanced to know, in a casual way, that he had spent some time in one of our colonies. That was all.

The singular thing was that I suddenly remembered the horsewhipping incident mentioned in a corner of the old newspaper which I had read so many years before! It simply flitted across my mind, as I looked at this stranger. I cannot say that I connected it with him. I simply recalled it, and should soon have forgotten it, and there, so far as I was concerned, the matter would have rested.

Suddenly I became aware that Mr. X. was edging his way towards me. He had not yet spoken to Mr. Z., had not even been introduced to him.

"Do you know if that is Mr. Z.?" he whispered.

"I believe so," I answered.

"Has he been in the Colonies?" he asked.

"I have heard so," I replied.

"Connected with the Colonial press, I suppose," Mr. X. proceeded.

"Rough times I imagine. It is funny, but I can't help thinking of a story I once read about a Colonial pressman getting a horse-whipping from some woman."

"Yes, it was from Lola Montez, when she was acting, in whatever colony it was," I promptly assented. "I remember it quite well. I was just thinking about it."

Mr. X. started, and looked curiously at me.

"It is a good many years ago now," he said. (He was considerably my senior.)

"Yes, I know," I answered. "I don't remember anything else about it—except that Lola Montez horsewhipped some man connected with some Colonial paper."

"This is very singular," remarked Mr. X. "Why should you and I both have awakened memories of this incident just now? I must scrape acquaintance with Mr. Z., and see if I can find out if any light can be thrown on the coincidence."

"If he has really been in that colony, it may be an awkward subject to approach," I said, smiling.

"Oh, I will do it with tact!" Mr. X. assured me. He edged away again, and in a few minutes I saw him engage Mr. Z. in a conversation which presently grew absorbing and animated.

As the two gentlemen were sure to have found many subjects of common interest, I should have thought no more of the matter. But by-and-by Mr. X. again approached me, this time with an air of triumph.

"We were on the right track!" he whispered. "That's the very man who was horsewhipped!"

"Never!" I exclaimed incredulously. It seemed such an unlikely admission for any man to volunteer.

"But it is so," said Mr. X. "I led up to it cautiously thus. I understood he had been in the colonies? Yes, in Australia. Connected with the press? I presumed. Yes, he had edited a paper there. Dear me, I supposed it was very different work from editing in Great Britain—at least, we home folks heard of bowie knives and pugilistic encounters, but probably there was much exaggeration. Well, yes, Mr. Z. thought there was a little exaggeration, but things were sometimes pretty bad, people would take the law into their own hands if they felt aggrieved. 'So out there editors have to mind their p's and q's,' I said, smiling. 'Yes, or suffer for not doing so,' said he. 'I had some experiences myself.' 'Did you, really?' I asked. 'How interesting! Nothing which endangered life, I hope?' 'Well, no,' he laughed; 'but unpleasant enough for all that. On one occasion a woman came with a horsewhip. She was not pleased at what I said about her acting. To own the truth she was the notorious Lola Montez.'"

That is all. There is no sequel to the incident, no explanation why the memories of Mr. X. and myself should suddenly have

divulged their neglected little record. I never again saw Mr. Z. I cannot recall his features and should not recognise a portrait of his if I saw it. I do not suppose Mr. X. and Mr. Z. ever met again. Their life lines certainly lay widely parted until the latter's ended in death.

Were the memories of Mr. X. and myself awakened simultaneously, or was there what may be called "telepathic" communication? What awakened them? Did they respond to anything in what some people would call the "aura" of Mr. Z.? If this be so, how is it that it does not happen more often, and to some purpose? Or is it possible that such an awakened and definite memory is, after all, but as a bead dropped from the chain of impressions, generally too rapid to be seized and defined, but by the totality of which we are "drawn" to one person and "repelled" from another? Who can say?

ISABELLA FYVIE MAYO.

---

### AN INVOCATION.

A HARP Eolian  
Is on my window-sill,  
A box of pulsing melodies,  
A wood-and-wire thrill.

Its songs are not its own—  
There is no music there;  
But it can phrase in tender tone  
The symphonies of air.

So many poets dead!  
Is all their power past?  
Think of the songs that might have been  
Had not death come too fast!

Why is my hand less skilled  
Than wood and wire be?  
Cannot one floating song be willed  
To breathe its tune to me?

Dear bygone poets, then,  
Here's paper spread and white;  
I dip for you a silver pen—  
Come, guide my hand and write!

A. M. F.

## EFFIE'S MARRIAGE.

THERE was a commotion in the Marine Parade, Eastville. Some one had fainted, they said—a girl.

An invalid? Oh, no; that pretty creature with the large sad eyes.

There for change, perhaps? Ye—s; or perhaps to take her away from a certain handsome detrimental.

Ah! Laurence Leicester; and he suddenly appeared at Eastville, and she—— Poor thing!

Thus, with variations, Effie Palgrave's and Laurence Leicester's romantic affairs were discussed.

Effie's mother took the girl back to their apartments, and waited in tribulation for a summons from Lady Royston, a hard, worldly, rich old woman with whom penniless Effie, her great niece, was a favourite.

\* \* \* \* \*

"You had better sit down, Rhoda," said Lady Royston to Mrs. Palgrave. "I see you are trembling. I was on the Parade this afternoon."

Mrs. Palgrave lifted beseeching eyes to the stern clever face above her.

"Now, Rhoda, explain the meaning of it."

Lady Royston was nicknamed "The Fate," when she was not given a worse name, owing to her indulgence in a desire to order other people's destinies.

"Explain?"

"Yes."

"I am afraid that it was all plain enough, Lady Royston."

"I don't understand you."

This was only refined cruelty to make the timid woman blunder into an explanation.

"I mean that as poor Effie's story is—as Laurence appeared—of course——"

"You never had the gift of speech, Rhoda. You mean that Euphemia"—she always called her Effie, but she was Euphemia that day—"a girl who has passed through two seasons, has been so badly brought up that she cannot meet an ineligible lover without behaving in a stagey manner, and inviting the fashion on the Parade to look on?"

"Well—she——"

"When I take my airing, people will point me out as the great-aunt of the girl who fainted!"



"I——"

"And when you go out (by the way, I suppose you will wear your most melancholy and deprecating countenance), people will——"

"I beg your pardon, but I think you might trust me to do the best for my daughter's reputation."

Her dignity served her, for the old lady continued less harshly:

"Rhoda, there is only one way out of this disgraceful business. A wife must be found for Leicester, and Euphemia must marry that man who——"

The mother flung her hands up to her face, perhaps to hide the anguish on it.

"To marry in hot haste when she loves another!"

"Rubbish! To talk like that after twenty-five years of society! Are you going to be left with six portionless daughters? Your work is simple, Rhoda. The girl has another lover—a staid man of forty-five, with an unappropriated million. Shall I have her here to stay, or will you undertake to make her see her duty?"

Mrs. Palgrave rose hastily.

"Thanks; I won't trouble you. I will see to it myself."

However, the mother's task would not have been so easily accomplished had not a certain paragraph shortly appeared in the papers. It was the announcement of the approaching marriage of Laurence Leicester to Miss Faisey, a beauty and an heiress.

After that the trouble which Effie gave her mother on the subject was trifling; of no more consequence than the faint wreaths of smoke from a volcano which has burnt itself out.

"When is he coming, my charming bridegroom, mamma?" asked the girl one day, much as if she had consented all along.

"Whenever you like, dear."

"I hope he won't expect me to be sentimental? I suppose not, though. An old fogey like him will be too rheumatic to trouble me with demonstrative affection."

"He is only forty-five, my dear child."

"Very likely; but he is as stiff as a poker, and when he dances he lifts one off one's feet and shakes the room."

"Married men don't often trouble themselves to dance with their wives, Effie, therefore you can banish *that* grief from you, at all events."

Partly because she was ashamed of her own petty fault-finding, partly because her words reminded her of the grace with which Laurence acquitted himself in a ball-room, Effie suddenly burst into tears and escaped from the room.

\* \* \* \* \*

The ceremony was over; tender youth tied to middle-age for life; for better for worse Effie had swallowed that much-gilded pill.

Even to think of Laurence was now a sin, she told herself; yet she met him everywhere, her eyes would stray to the door until he

entered, and she allowed him to talk to her and put on her wraps as he had been wont to do.

Had he and she not been so basely handled she would have behaved differently, she also told herself; for her husband, she was forced to own, was a good man.

Too late she had learnt that Laurence's coming marriage to Miss Faisey had been contradicted. She had been duped into a hateful union, and it gave her almost a right to permit her old lover to hover around her.

Ah, almost—not quite—the right. Not a great deal of difference in the phrase, yet enough to torment her conscience at moments; such as when her husband took the wrap from Laurence's hands with firmness and dignity—by the way, how dignified he could look at times, considering that he could not dance—or when he framed her small face in his hands and turned it towards him, looking at it with a patient mournfulness which hurt her more than if he had struck her.

"You are getting terribly prudish, Effie," Laurence said to her some months later; "the day is not distant when I shall be considered unfit to enter your presence."

"Don't, Laurence; unseemly jests never amuse me."

"I am not jesting; and, after all, what is there to mind if your husband does not? We only talk, and where's the harm?"

"Yes, Laurence, we only talk," she began, but she did not proceed.

Where is the harm, he had asked? Was it no harm to go to rest night after night and to awake morning after morning with the image of one before her who was not her husband? To count a day ill-spent during which she had not seen him? To shrink from the mere contemplation of the time when he might wish to go out of her life? And yet, thrust it away from her as she would, she knew that this dread was a possibility. Some subtle something told her that the strength of this unhappy attachment, which gave to her life all the sweet, but also all the bitter, was far greater on her side than on Laurence's.

It was not long after this that Laurence Leicester went home from his club with a white face and a dizzy brain. He had been playing higher even than usual, fortune had made a dead set against him, and he was a disgraced man unless he could have the command of several thousands. He reviewed his position, but knew that he could not lay his hand on as many hundreds.

Yes! there was one way, but——

The blood mounted to his brain as he took a scented, prettily-tinted letter from his desk in Effie's beloved handwriting. Hitherto he had never held it without putting it to his lips, but now he could only hold it stiffly while he struggled for power to act a chivalrous man's part and destroy it.

Twice he put it away, a third time he took it out again, thrust

it into his pocket, rushed out and made his way to Grosvenor Square.

What were a few thousands to her? Her millionaire husband was so lavish he would never know for what purpose they had been used.

Naturally he would not threaten her; in fact he would not, except as a last resource, show her the letter. She was so good that she loved his fair name better than he did.

He never knew how he got through it, but Effie did not appear quite capable of understanding him; at least, so he read the stony, peculiar expression in her eyes.

After a moment power of speech returned to her, and, with her gaze fixed on the lilac-tinted letter which she had written to him during her paroxysm of madness at the discovery of the duplicity with which she and he had been treated, she said slowly:

"Let me see whether I take in your meaning, Laurence. I am to rob my husband in order to——"

"Effie! What a word! He gives you untold thousands to do what you like with."

"In fact I might construe your words into a threat. If I like I may buy back my letter; that is, if I fear my husband's anger should you feel disposed to show it to him?"

She was the calmer of the two. He had believed himself to be made of sufficiently strong material for a villain, but he was not quite so bad as he thought.

"For heaven's sake don't look like that, Effie," he cried; "and forget all I have said. I am a cur. There, see," and he tore the letter into fragments. "I am a disgraced man, and desperation led me to this dastardly conduct."

Effie stayed his hand as he was about to throw away the pieces, then she composedly gathered them up in her handkerchief. "Effie!" he repeated, in unfeigned anguish. "Forgive me, and forget this wretched business. Let me fling away those bits of paper." Forgive him! Yes, perhaps in time she could do that, but forget it, never; and she loved this man, loved him instead of the husband who was waiting for the day when her heart would cease to go astray, and turn towards its rightful place!

"Laurence, don't press me for an answer to-night. Come to-morrow morning."

"But I want no answer," he said vehemently. "I tell you my madness is over, and I humbly beg your pardon. Of course I'll come to-morrow just to see you; if you don't hate the sight of me, that is."

He gave her a long look as he left her; she was so still, and if she said good-bye, the words were inaudible. And there she remained, half stunned, yet mechanically thinking.

"It was best so. I will never see him again, but I might have

broken down if I had attempted the final farewell. He shall not be disgraced, but the assistance shall come through my husband. He will help him, I know ; and he is so good and so patient that he will not expect too much from me—just—at first.”

“I say,” said one club-acquaintance of Laurence's to another, “Leicester is in luck. I wish I had his appointment. Uncommon good one!”

“In India, is it not?”

“Yes.”

Effie did not make quite a full confession at that time ; not until later when they had drawn nearer together.

“John, on the eve of my marriage-day I was not all bad. Mamma made me see the importance of the step I was taking, and told me that in my own hands lay my happiness. ‘One life or another, Effie, so long as you do your duty, there is not much difference.’”

“I made good resolutions, John. I prayed to forget Laurence ; I resolved never to lead you to financial ruin, to keep no secrets from you. But when I discovered that the contradiction of Laurence's marriage had been purposely kept from me until I was your wife, I forgot everything, and I wrote those mad lines telling Laurence that if I found life insupportable, I was ready to fly with him at any moment. You know it was only the wild delirium of the hour. You know that I could never have done such a thing had my life been the most miserable on earth. Can you ever forgive me?”

The exact words of his reply not even to her mother did she repeat, but they caused tears of repentance and of gladness to flow in abandonment from her very heart.

As time wore on, when they took their daily drives, the spectacle of the quiet-faced man and the now blooming, happy young wife caused much talk ; and much wonderment that, for once, the meddling of “The Fate” had not wrecked two or more lives.

MARGARET MUDIE.



## WHERE FLOWS THE RHONE.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "LETTERS FROM MAJORCA," "MEMORIALS OF MRS. HENRY WOOD," ETC., ETC.

NO town in the Lower Valley of the Rhone possesses a greater charm, more points of interest than Avignon. Historically it has a great past. Great was its rise and great its fall, amazing its vicissitudes. It has been the scene of some of the most gorgeous pageants of earth, and again it has had to sit lowly, and clothe itself in sackcloth and ashes.

Every succeeding hour spent in the old town only served to increase our affection for it. Each passing day disclosed some fresh sign or remembrance of the centuries gone by. Time after time we were reminded that this was the ancient city of the popes. We stood upon the heights of the Rocher des Doms and gazed upon that wonderful and far-famed panorama, through which the great river takes its silent, but flashing, winding course. Every foot of the vast stretch of country seemed historical and classical ground, as indeed it is. Here in the days remote came sailing up the stream pageant after pageant, prince after prince, all to pay homage to the heads of the Church. The popes drawing the eyes and attention of the whole civilized world upon Avignon, made it perhaps the most famous town of the mediæval ages, as well as one of the richest and most beautiful. Here the popes added to their mighty power, the luxuriousness of their living, and, too often, the wickedness of their ways.

Still, it was a magnificent city, and many of its traditions, and not a few of its ancient landmarks have remained to the present day.

From that wonderful rocher, you look down upon the river flowing at its feet; rushing through the four remaining arches of the famous bridge of St. Bénézet: arches that have withstood all the ravages of time and water, so well did the saint do his work. The whole nineteen arches would be still standing, if they had not been destroyed by man: time and the river and the air would have spared them: that climate which is described as "*Avenio ventosa, sine vento venenosa, cum vento fastidiosa.*" Here in the chapel crowning the fourth arch lie the bones of St. Bénézet, somewhat in the unenviable position of Mahomet's coffin. For seven hundred years the river has risen and fallen beneath them; now angry and furious and swelling to an immense volume, flooding the country and spreading desolation around; now falling into quiet ways and

peaceful slumbers as though it were the meekest and mildest of rivers flowing to the sea.

Opposite rises the ancient fortress, for ever associated with mystery and romance as well as with the fortunes of war; for here was confined the Man with the Iron Mask, than whom no character in history is more shrouded in uncertainty. We may surmise and guess and wonder, but who he was can never now be known. Secrets do not come back from the dead.

How interesting and picturesque was the Sister who conducted us about the ruins, moving silently in her nun's dress, and speaking in a low subdued voice. How pathetic her eyes, how charming her tones, when she spoke of her past and the world she had for the time being forsaken. Two years have rolled by since that day when she suddenly plunged us from the glamour of broad sunshine and blue skies into the profound obscurity of that dungeon in which the Man with the Iron Mask (would we could give him a name!) passed some of the hours of that long captivity that ended only in death. Two years: what has she done with them? Has she relented, and gone back to the world, and become a happy wife, making the paradise of some fortunate man? If it is not so, yet it will be so when the day comes and the hour strikes, for it was writ in the stars that she should not die unwedded. There are some faces with their fate for good or ill so plainly marked that they who possess the gift of the seer in the least degree can foretell the future. Not every face carries this index; happily they are comparatively rare; but when seen they are unmistakable.

Another romantic but distant spot may be descried from the rocher: Vaucluse, with its mysterious fountain, its woods and groves, where Petrarch wandered hand in hand with Laura, until she died of love for him; of hope deferred; for which no excuse is apparent. And then, when her spirit had flown to the unseen world, and her body lay in the silent tomb, he wandered alone, and wrote his sonnets; and who knows how far grief and remorse lived in his heart when the light of his eyes had gone from him, and he might call to her, but she could not answer? Men play havoc with their best blessings; blessings that come to them so easily and naturally, so straight from Heaven, that they fail to recognise them; never realise and appreciate them until they are withdrawn. Nothing is harder to bear than the inevitable in such a form, yet how often men lay this burden on their own shoulders.

A hundred cords seemed to bind us to Avignon, not least of all the comfortable and admirable Hôtel d'Europe, and the extremely amiable and attentive landlady, Madame Ville; who has since proved her fidelity to her guests in the following manner.

One day, wandering with H. C. into a bric-à-brac shop, of which there are not a few in this ancient City of the Popes, we lighted upon



a prize: two prizes. One, an excellent engraving of Philip V. of Spain, of which we happened to possess the original. Next some old blue jars, which, if not exactly prizes, were too good to be passed over. Lastly, greatest prize of all, a large carved old panel, dating not exactly from the days of the popes of Avignon, yet owning some centuries of existence: one of the loveliest panels, some of the very finest carving we had ever seen. We secured it, paid for it, and the whole was immediately to be forwarded to England.

Before leaving this Temple of Antiquities, the presiding goddess—a shrivelled old woman of seventy—brought forth a pair of silver pistols with gold and silver trappings, and used all her powers of persuasion in trying to effect a bargain. To this persuasion was added that of her son. Nothing would induce him to come out of his distant shell, but the unseen Oracle made himself distinctly heard.

The pistols had belonged to a prince of a French Royal house, which, the old woman considered, added infinitely to their value. If we did not share her opinion, we kept it to ourselves. The pistols, she declared, were worth their weight in gold. "With a few diamonds thrown in," came from the unseen Oracle. But she would only charge us their weight in silver, she protested. "At which they are given away," chimed in the Oracle.

From the price asked we thought they must be enormously heavy. Moreover, we had no weakness or hobby for silver pistols, or anything else of the rococo school, and we resisted the old woman's persuasions even when backed by the Oracle.

Time passed on. The case duly arrived in England, minus the panel, plus the pistols! A note was enclosed. The old woman and the Oracle deplored that by accident they had sold the panel, but hoped the substitution of the magnificent pistols would atone for the oversight.

An eruption of Mount Vesuvius was nothing to our wrath and indignation. To substitute a pair of wretched pistols for a panel that had not its equal in the South Kensington Museum deserved only one return: to hasten back to Avignon, despatch the wicked old woman with one firearm, the perfidious Oracle with the other. This would relegate both to their proper regions, where they might bear each other company. A night's rest moderated our wrath, and we decided on less severe measures. We returned the pistols to Madame Ville; placed the matter in her hands, begged her to send for the old woman and the Oracle and assure them that unless the money paid for the panel was instantly refunded, we would at once return to Avignon and crush them by a *procès*: and we intended to be as good as our word.

Madame was equal to the occasion. The wicked pair arrived at her bidding and tried to brave it out. They would not return any of the money and would not take back the pistols, which they vowed, by all the black images in all the pilgrim churches, we had bought. But



Madame was not to be imposed upon. She came down upon them with all her eloquence, threatened them with unheard-of vengeance, and gave them twenty-four hours to consider the matter. For as she said in her letter to us on the position of affairs: "A *procès* is all very well, monsieur, and no doubt you would gain it, and the wretched couple would be exposed, crushed, ruined and disgraced; but at the cost of infinite trouble and a long journey on your part; *et vraiment le jeu ne valait pas la chandelle.*"

The wicked couple had gone off shaking and quaking in their shoes, for under her torrent of eloquence all their bravado had fled, and they had slunk away blinded by dazzling visions of the law meting out to them solitary confinement or *travaux forcés*. Before the twenty-four hours had expired the Oracle arrived with the money in hand; humbly gave it over to Madame, who returned him his pistols and sent him about his business: minus the cost of the journey from England to Avignon, and the duty exacted on re-entering the country.

But Madame had put herself to great trouble in the matter. The pistols had remained at the custom-house in a distant town, where they had to be cleared and the duty paid. She had written to a friend in that town, who had done all that was needful and forwarded the offending weapons. On receiving our letter she had gone off to consult a friend of hers who was a notary, placing the matter before him and asking his advice; and there were several other *démarches* to be taken which she went through with great energy and determination: and all to oblige a late guest who had only passed a few days at her house and incurred a very modest bill. This was truly acting the part of the Good Samaritan.

But to return to the time when we were still in Avignon, reluctantly making up our minds to leave it.

Every day the Rhône was rising higher, and people began to look serious. The floods so dreaded throughout the neighbouring country threatened to overflow: and in point of fact presently did so, to an extent unknown for many years. Madame was grave and anxious the morning of our departure.

"These floods spread devastation for miles around," she said. "The whole Valley of the Rhône suffers more or less. It is pitiable to see the distress that follows. And we can do nothing; cannot relieve a thousandth part of the misery. It becomes a national matter; but those afar off seem to have enough to do with their own poor, and are slow to respond. I am sorry, monsieur, that you leave us, but if the floods come, you will be well out of it, and will spare yourselves much heartache."

So we took our leave one fine morning when the water was still rising, and the Rhône, green and sparkling, was rushing through the four arches with a roaring sound of fell, relentless purpose, that might well have caused the bones of St. Bénézet to turn in their cold

sarcophagus above them. Our destination was the old town of Orange, and we had wished to go by steamer, but the steamers had been put out of their ordinary running by the rising and swift-flowing waters, and there was no dependence to be placed upon them. So we started by train.

The spires of Avignon and the great towers of the Papal palace stood out sharp and clear against a background of blue sky, as we left the old town behind us: skies as calm and peaceful as though there were no rushing rivers below preparing to spread ruin and devastation in their march. In quitting Avignon we were parting from one element which had been present with us ever since we had entered the town: the influence of those picturesque mediæval times that have left their indelible mark upon the world. The other element, inseparable from the whole neighbourhood and the Lower Rhone Valley, still followed us: the influence of the Romans, dating back to days far earlier than the Middle Ages. Every place we stopped at bore more or less traces of the rule and power of those masters of the world.

In the journey itself there was nothing specially remarkable. We had separated from the lovely river which ran its course some miles away from the line. There were broad, green plains about us, vineyards despoiled of their fruit, orchards equally bare, and undulations that seemed to flow on like the swell of a mighty ocean and lose themselves in the distant mountains. Had we been walking, we should have been constantly reminded of Rome and the days of the Caesars.

At Carpentras, where the train made a long halt, we were in one of their favourite settlements. Of the Triumphal Arch through which they passed victorious with their armies there still stands a fragment with notable sculptures on the piers. For long it formed part of the Bishops' palace. Perhaps they thought it would add stability to their mitre as well as dignity to their house, this trace of a people almost invincible; but the bishops disappeared and the arch went with them, and nothing but this fragment is left of the ancient glory.

Mediæval remains abound: the *Porte d'Orange* stands as firmly to-day as when five hundred years ago it rose stone by stone to its grand and stately perfection. The town of course formed part of the old papal territory, and so was well fortified: we may still look upon its old feudal walls, towers and gateways; partially ruined and crumbling it is true, but all the more beautiful and romantic for these marks of Time's footprints. Here, no doubt, came Petrarch, when he ascended *Mont Ventoux*, which towers ten miles away into cloud-land. It is the great barometer of the country, and when *Ventoux* is not nightcapped the people tell you to leave your umbrella behind you, for it will not rain: reversing the old English advice to do as you like when it rains, but arm yourself when the sun shines.

*Bédouin*, a small village with gable-roofed cottages, lies at the

foot of Ventoux; and here you may hire a mule, or walk up to the top, and revel in the scene and pure air, so light and rarefied that you no longer breathe unconsciously. Petrarch is said to have ascended from Malaucène, perhaps the only starting-point in his day for the upper regions. It was then a notable excursion: a supposedly dangerous performance, necessitating a precautionary interview beforehand with one's father-confessor, making a will and generally setting one's house in order: but in these days of Alpine climbing and Alpine catastrophes that do not even bear contemplation, the ascent of Ventoux with its 6500 feet is less than child's play. The sensational element of danger, the thrilling experience of wondering whether one's next footstep is to take us out of the world, these are provokingly absent from the ascent of Ventoux. If it were not for the risk attending these adventures, the Alpine Club might close its records. For our own part, we are patiently waiting the opening of the railway up the Jungfrau for our first ascent into these realms of air.

"He who fights and runs away,  
Will live to fight another day."

Ventoux is snowcapped for quite half the year, and there have been summers when it has never quite disappeared. It is a lordly object, standing out against the blue sky, the sun's rays dazzling and sparkling upon its white robes of spring, the summit crowned by a small sixteenth century chapel dedicated to St. Croix. If the good priests would only invent a miracle or set up a black image, the mule path would soon become picturesque with pilgrims, relieving, it may be, the congested state of the church of St<sup>es</sup> Maries in the Camargue, and becoming a rival to Lourdes.

From the chapel the view is unequalled. The lovely hills of Dauphiné and Savoy, than which none in the great Alpine chain are more romantic and full of interest, are clearly traced; so are the wild mountains of the Cevennes—*le désert*—more suggestive of rough and rude life, of internal warfare and persecution; civil and religious broils ending in bloodshed: whilst to the left again lies Auvergne, with its extinct volcanoes and its hot springs.

Here again we trace the course of the majestic Rhône and its sister river the Durance, the latter so dear to the hearts of those born and bred within sound of its flowing. Here stood Petrarch, his mind and heart no doubt filled with the image of Laura: on these heights, amidst all this majestic beauty and grandeur, feeling nearer to her glorified being than on the lower plains of earth. Afar off, if not actually visible, were the groves in which they wandered together, and which her spirit is said to have haunted ever since. No doubt he indulged in the sweet luxury of sadness, mixed with some shadow of remorse as his past selfishness stood out before him in its true colours. Many an unavailing sigh must have gone out into space,

many a wish to recall the past. Who is without those sighs and wishes?

It was a short journey to Orange, and soon over. The ancient town lies in a wide plain, through which flows the winding Rhône. Here again we are in the midst of Roman remains: a magnificent Amphitheatre: a Triumphal Arch, which from a distance looks perfect and untouched; and only on one side proves, on a nearer inspection, to have been very much restored.

The Amphitheatre is in the very centre of the town; the Arch stands well and boldly some distance down the long, broad, straight, tree-lined road leading to Valence; a splendid time-worn monument, its golden yellow tone partly due to age, a vivid and beautiful picture against the blue sky, which again is framed in by the perfect arch. The whole has a wonderfully rich and startling effect, less suggestive of antiquity than of eternal youth and vigour.

Approaching, one sees that the reliefs are of great merit: groups of figures, naval scenes full of detail; masts, yards, anchors, shrouds, such as might have belonged to Roman galleys: but many of the scenes are not to be interpreted; there is no modern Daniel or Joseph to do this: their meaning is lost in the obscurity of the ages. In one panel a female is holding her hand to her ear, a symbol that has puzzled succeeding generations. Had the finger been placed on the lips, the meaning would have been clear, and would have said in so many words, Speech is silvern, but Silence is golden: advice that hitherto, in the feminine world, has fallen upon deaf ears. There the archway stands for ever, a splendid monument to the glory of Rome. The word *MARIO* is traced on some of its panels, and it is supposed that the Arch was built by Marcus Aurelius, to commemorate his successes on the Danube and in Germany. Again, it has been supposed to refer to Marius and his victory over the Cimbri, but as Triumphal Arches were not known before the Cæsars, this possibility apparently falls to the ground.

The Amphitheatre is, as we have just said, in the centre of the town, producing a sort of death-in-life effect upon the spectator. It is a gigantic monument, and the market is held under the very shadow of its walls.

To-day was market-day, and the place was crowded with all manner of people and every variety of stall. The air was full of sound; voices of buyers and sellers intent on over-reaching each other. The contrast between the ancient walls, that had seen nearly 2000 years roll away, and the modern element was curious and startling. For the people were not particularly interesting. We looked in vain for such types of beauty as are found amongst the women of Arles. There was no beauty here, but a very commonplace element: women with loud voices and no refinement of feature and no grace of form. More than ever we thought the women of Arles a mystery. There must be some unseen spell at work; some benign fairy godmother,

who presides at their birth, with an inexhaustible supply of beauty to deal out to them as each one enters the world.

This morning the market-place was as crowded as usual. Country people had evidently come in from all parts of the neighbourhood, and those who had nothing else to do, lounged and gossiped.

To pass from this into the interior of the Amphitheatre was to pass at a bound out of the nineteenth century into the first or second. It lies at the foot of a hill, and the hill-side was excavated into a semicircle of seats, range above range, where the Romans sat and enjoyed their bull fights and gladiatorial games, just as to-day they carry on the traditions in Spain. Overlooking these was the Citadel, built by the Romans, which in time passed over to the Princes of Orange, and was finally destroyed by Louis XIV.

As we have said, the walls of the Amphitheatre are colossal, shutting out the world, all its sights and sounds. On the one side is the vast range of semicircular seats, overlooking the immense arena, on the other the huge walls which almost look a labour too great for human hands: above all, the blue sky. There is nothing visible to remind one that outside within a few yards beat modern human hearts, living in a very modern human hive. These walls are 120 feet high, 340 feet long, 13 feet thick, and they look the more crushing and colossal in that you cannot get far from them. The huge blocks of the semicircle are fitted together without cement, of which those great builders were independent. Unseen passages intersect them. A great awning was stretched over the scene in those bygone days, almost as gigantic and wonderful as the building itself. On one of the blocks the inscription may still be read, *Eq : C : III.*, meaning the Knights' Third Row.

Close by was the Circus, where the sports were less cruel. Nothing of this remains but broken and melancholy arches. Maurice of Nassau brought it to ruin, for no other reason than the eternal love of destruction, and but for him the Ampitheatre would be far more perfect than it is.

As we were about to pass out, the old doorkeeper, who took the small charge demanded for admission, appeared on the scene with a great green parrot perched upon his wrist. The custodian looked more time-worn than the walls, and he must have read our thoughts, for he said at once:

"Yes; I am eighty; and a man of eighty is by comparison older than a brick wall of 2000 years."

"No doubt you have had a harder life," we observed; "and care killed a cat."

"And you may have had a shrewish wife," said H. C., harping upon the everlasting theme; exactly as though he was going about the world collecting evidence pro and con: and according to the final result intended to join the rank of Benedicks, or for ever become a misogynist. The truth being that he was to one heart constant

never; running from one lovely face to another, as the bee flies from flower to flower, extracting as much sweet honey as he could gather, and moving on to the next.

"A wife?" said the old man; "no I never married; never could afford to marry. Thank goodness I escaped that calamity. I was engaged once when I was 18: but she died in less than a year. Perhaps we shall marry in heaven."

"There are no marriages in heaven," said H. C. severely. "All earthly ties will be dissolved in the next world."

The old man shrugged his shoulders. "Pardon me, monsieur, but I think you know very little about it. At any rate, we shall be friends, if nothing more. Here I have been for years. Life is dull enough in this sleepy old town, except on Saturdays, when it suddenly wakes up to animation, and the market is full of carts and stalls and people, and they come and chatter with me the whole morning through. If it were not for these market days I should long since have died of *ennui*."

Here the parrot flapped its wings and craned its neck up and down and seemed to think itself a neglected quantity.

"César!" it screamed, flapping its wings. "Je suis César!"

"And I believe it," cried the old man. "I verily believe the spirit of Cæsar or some other warrior haunts the bird. Nothing daunts it; neither man nor animal. It would face a lion and fight it. Six times over in my life have I given it a companion parrot. On each occasion the next morning the new bird has lain dead at the bottom of the cage, and César has stood gazing at it with flapping wings and glaring eyes, looking a perfect demon. He is possessed; I am sure he is possessed."

"How old is the bird?" we asked.

Again the old man shrugged his shoulders. "I am eighty," he said, "and my parents had it long before I was born. I daresay it is two hundred years old—or 2000 for that matter. Perhaps it was alive in the days of Cæsar. It will be here long after I am gone; in fact I don't believe it will ever die."

"César!" screamed the bird, flapping its wings, and really looking as though it had something of a demon about it. "Je suis César! Gard' à toi, mon feux!"

The old man boxed its head, and the bird pecked at his sleeve and tore a shred out of the coat—which might have seen sixty years of service.

"Gard' à toi!" cried the bird; and with a perfectly unearthly, ear-piercing shriek, it spread its wings and flew back to its abode: the little cupboard of a room that the custodian inhabited almost underground.

"Are you not afraid of losing it?" we asked, seeing the bird with unclipped wings.

"No," replied the bird's master. "Nothing would persuade him



to go away. Sometimes I almost wish he would, and rid me of the bother and expense of keeping him. Once someone took a fancy to him and asked me to give him to them. 'Take him, cage and all,' I said, smiling to myself; and so they did. They lived two streets off. Away they went with the cage, as pleased as Polichinelle. 'Gard' à toi!' screamed the bird, all the way down the street. 'Gard' à toi!' They put him into their *salon* for the night. The next morning they went in to have a friendly interview with the bird. Sapristi! the deluge! Ruin and devastation! The cage was on the ground, the door open; how he opened it, no one ever knew. Curtains, chiffons, all torn to shreds; little biblots lying on the ground, some smashed, others cracked; books with leaves and covers torn; in short a general sacking and destruction—but no bird! They searched every hole and crevice of the room—in vain. The creature had gone up the chimney and came back to me as black as a crow, and looking like a veritable diable incarnate. He shrieked with laughter, until I was convulsed myself to hear him. Perfectly well he knew what he had done. 'Gard' à toi!' he shrieked. 'César! Je suis César!' And then he went off into shriek after shriek of laughter again. The cage came back, but it was the very last time that I was asked to give him away or even to lend him."

"Can he say nothing else?" we asked. "The same phrase over and over again must become a little monotonous."

"Nothing else, monsieur?" cried the old man: "why he talks like a Christian—for all he's a demon; holds long conversations with me; chapter and verse; and what's more, he understands. It's as clear as daylight that he understands. If I'm at my dinner and don't give him just what he likes, he swears at me till my blood almost freezes; swears like a Chr—that is, I should say, like a demon: words escape one by accident. *Merci, monsieur*," as we slipped a little *douceur* into the withered old hand. "*Merci*; I will drink to your health. And I assure you that if I don't give a little of it to that bird, he will let me have no peace. He is quite a judge, too, and the finer the cognac, the more he likes it. A *canard* is his great weakness, but if I give it him before I have put the cognac into the coffee, he throws down the sugar, flaps his wings, screeches enough to take off the roof of your head, and swears horribly. No one need tell me that that bird does not know and understand everything that's going forward."

... We had to pass the room—about four feet square—to get out. It contained the man's whole *ménage*: bed, stove, chair, table, cupboard for larder and pantry, and perch for *César*. The cage had been discarded some time ago.

We looked in. The bird was slipping about the table, which was covered with oil-cloth and, like a waxed floor, was difficult to walk upon; and it really looked—in the language of the Police Reports—very drunk and disorderly. Seeing us, it put its head on one side



with a very maudlin expression, and flapping its wings, closed them suddenly and began a verse of the Marseillaise. It went through the whole verse without a flaw or breakdown: for all the world, as the old man said, as though it understood every word and thoroughly appreciated the Republican spirit of the song. Then with a shriek, and a final "*Je suis César! Gard' à toi, mon fieux!*" it suddenly collapsed on to its back, turned up its claws, shook them as though in convulsions, and closing its eyes, turned stiff and rigid.

The old custodian was in ecstasies.

"Have you ever seen the like!" he cried. "Now he is acting, and I never saw him do it better. No Christian could do it better. I defy Sarah Bernhardt to equal that bird in a dying scene. There he'll stay for three or four minutes, and then he'll suddenly resuscitate, shake his feathers, and shriek with laughter. Well, monsieur, if you must depart, there is nothing left for me but to wish you bon voyage when you set out again on your travels."

We went back into the modern world feeling that we had assisted at the first act of a very fine comedy. The bird quite haunted one, and we almost felt inclined to agree with the old custodian, and to think the creature really possessed by an evil spirit.

The country carts, which had come in laden with all sorts of things, were ranged against the old walls of the Amphitheatre; in front of them the stalls had spread their temptations; flowers and onions, poultry and cream tarts—such tarts as the *paysans* make and love in their villages: and very excellent they are—seemed all mixed together like a happy family in the market world.

Here again the artistic pottery was lying on straw on the ground, and again we regretted our inability to ship a cargo to England.

"We are terribly behind these people," said H. C. fondling a water-jug as though it had been a pet kitten. "But for truly inartistic people, without sense of colour or conception of the beautiful, commend me to the English. One could weep over it with pleasure, if all one's tears had not been dried up in weeping over one's own sins."

He was thinking of all the fines Lady Maria had paid out for him; of his gentle walks beside her bath-chair, when he cast down his eyes and looked at his toes as every pretty girl and woman passed, and then sneaked a moment behind the chair to look back and admire a graceful carriage or light and airy footstep. And again there came the thought of countless promises made and broken, tears shed that would have filled an ocean, and shattered hearts living, like a cracked vase, in daily possibility of utter destruction.

He put down the jug he was caressing, and we went to the other side of the market-place and looked upon the incongruous scene: the modern market crowded with the uninteresting men and women of to-day, backed by those colossal walls that had frowned upon the

joys and sorrows of humanity for well nigh 2000 years. Perhaps nowhere else could one look upon so contradictory a picture. For as we have said, the town is of great antiquity. It was the Arausio of the Ancients : or rather the ancient Arausio stood upon the site of the Orange of to-day.

With the exception of its remains, the new town is commonplace enough. Narrow streets have taken the place of what was once full of picturesque outlines.

Its history is somewhat far fetched and complicated. The family of Nassau bore the name of Orange, and so to us, it is very familiar. But how many associate the title borne by the eldest son of the House of Holland with this almost unknown, unfrequented town in the Lower Valley of the Rhône? Who indeed ever breaks his journey, even for a few hours, to gaze upon the wonderful relics of the past, the splendid Roman monuments that here live out their days in comparative obscurity?

The name of Orange was borne by the House of Nassau. It formed the chief town of a small principality belonging to the de Baux, the first of whom, Raimbault de Baux, was killed at the siege of Antioch in 1099. These were days when the Roman rule had passed away and been forgotten, though its glorious monuments were still standing, as they are standing to-day. The centuries rolled on until the year 1531, when Philibert de Chalons died, leaving no other heir than his sister, who had married the Prince of Nassau Dillingen. Then when William III. of England—great monarch and capable—died, the King of Prussia claimed Orange as a descendant of the princes of Nassau-Orange. The principality was made over to the King of France in exchange for a substantial *quid pro quo*; and in the possession of France it has since remained; and probably no one—not even Germany—would wish to take it from her.

But thus it comes to pass that any male heir to the throne of Holland bears an empty title, and has probably never even set eyes upon the town whence that title is derived: the capital of the old principality through which the Rhône takes its majestic course.

But Orange is not actually built on the Rhône. It lies on the Meyne, a small and more peaceful stream, that never dreams of rising above a certain height, has never been known to overflow and ruin its neighbours' fields and vineyards.

The Meyne takes its way through the plains like a small silver thread, whilst its great rival rushes onwards in strength and triumph three miles away. The plain here is wide and not very rich in appearance, whilst the few trees visible, olives and willows that reach to no great height, give them a distinctly melancholy aspect. The land is not unfruitful, but its yieldings are not of a nature to add to the beauty of a landscape. This owes its charm, as a rule, to luxuriant hedges, spreading oaks and elms, flowering chestnuts and silver beeches: features that are here, as in most parts

of France, conspicuous by their absence. There is little beauty in French vineyards, and when the waving corn has been cut down and carried—as it had long been when we looked out upon these plains—a dreary waste of ploughed land remains to greet the eye through the pale winter months of the year.

A very pretty river or canal runs through the town, and small houses built upon its banks find their reflections in the calm water. On market days the little bridge spanning it is alive with a procession of native carts, picturesque with their canvas coverings, and their drivers in blue blouses or some other dress of the country—there is little real *costume*—whip up their lazy horses or slow going oxen, in vain efforts to reach the market-place at the stroke of the hour.

If a woman is the charioteer, so much the better; the cavalcade is still more picturesque; for though she be not fair to see, there is a greater softness about her than about the rough, unshaven, heavily shod husband or brother, and her head is enveloped in a bright handkerchief which adds colouring to the scene, and has a certain grace of its own. Beneath it the white cap is just visible, keeping the neatly arranged hair in place; and if the gold earrings are for the time eclipsed, a gold chain is prominently displayed and proclaims the pedigree and respectability of the owner. Throughout France, next to their honour, the women of the country—*paysans*, small farmers' wives—cherish their jewellery.

The town of Orange itself, all that is modern of it—and it is nearly all more or less new—has, we have said, very little to recommend it. We saw it under the advantages of market day, when it was fairly lively and bustling: but it was evident that for the five other working days of the week it goes to sleep. In the one solitary square we found arrayed the fruit stalls, corn stalls and “dry goods” stalls, by which we mean stuffs and woollens, needles and threads. Here, too, there was more artistic pottery, to drive H. C. wild with art worship and the desire to possess his neighbours' goods, without exactly breaking the Tenth Commandment, since the coveted treasures might be had for a consideration. Not very far off, just round the corner, and almost within sound of the cries of the sellers, we came upon an old curiosity shop, which for us ever possesses the fascination of the basilisk. We had found treasures in Avignon, and as yet had to learn the perfidy of the wicked woman and her oracle. If they were not drowned in the floods that followed our departure, it must be that a certain unmentionable being reserves his prime ministers for yet more perfidious dealings with mankind.

But this old curiosity shop in the old square at Orange appeared, like a good deal of the town itself, neglected and poverty stricken. There was no animation about it, but a distinctly pathetic air. It looked as though a five-franc piece might buy up the whole contents, and no great bargain would be made. All the same we went in.

The little bell tinkled and a young and comely woman answered

to the summons. A very different goddess, this, from the old Avignon dragon. She at least would not despise her wares, and they had far more than a mere surface value. Their antiquities dated back to the days of the Romans, their genuineness was as undoubted as though stamped with the date of the period. The bell tinkled again, and the husband came in; a young, good-looking man; and neither husband nor wife had any signs of the ordinary overreaching antiquarian about them. Somehow we felt profoundly sorry for them. Here was possibly a romance in humble life. They had married out of pure love for each other; imprudently, no doubt; with no present prospects, but trusting for something to turn up in the future. How could they possibly keep body and soul together by the returns of such a collection? It must be not living, but starvation; and there was a certain air about the wife: a sort of assumed cheerfulness, an apparent anxiety to make the most of things: that seemed to argue a wish to hide the truth from the world—or so we imagined.

In the end we concluded that we had exaggerated the skeleton in the cupboard; they were not as badly off as we fancied. It was evident that love had not flown out at the window, so that poverty could not have come in at the door—or the saying quoted for centuries by wise parents and anxious guardians fell to the ground and must be quoted no more.

We went through the collection and bought sundry antiquities; amongst them an old glass plate and an old glass vase, both dating back to the first century; both Roman; both dug out of the earth not very far from Orange. The iridescent colours were exquisite; the shape of the vase was ravishing, and if it had lost one handle, by turning that part a little away, the defect was not seen. It is true the husband warned us not to wash them: in spite of which warning, on our return home, we soaked the plate in hot water, washed it, and dried it in the sun: thus following the example of a certain lady friend who possessed a Sir Joshua valued at some thousands.

One morning a brilliant idea struck her. She was tired of its sombre tone, due she felt sure to the fogs of London; and to improve this she applied hot water, soapsuds and a nail brush, with all the strength of her delicate hands. Encouraged by the dirty look of the water, she gave it a second application: or, as she called it, "a rinsing."

It was dried and put back, and proud of her achievement yet somehow feeling a certain uneasy sensation about the heart, she summoned her art-critic from Pall Mall—whose word in the picture world is as unanswerable as the Medean laws—to come and admire her handiwork and give his opinion upon the result.

"Madam," replied the great critic in tones as if he were pronouncing the doom of the world: "Madam, when I last saw that

Sir Joshua, I would have given you a cheque for it for £6000. To-day it would be dear at a £20 note. You have simply ruined your picture—and blotted out your ancestress into the bargain. It was one of the loveliest Sir Joshuas I have ever seen."

Our plate, fortunately, was not worth £6000, but the result was the same. All its beauty had vanished. The peculiar green tone was there; it still bore an unmistakable look of age; but the iridescence had disappeared; the charm had dissolved in the hot water—like Sir Joshua's tone under the nail-brush—and we realised the wisdom of following good advice. Fortunately we had practised on the plate only, and after the discouraging result we left the vase severely alone. It still charms by its beautiful form, incrustations of dirt, and rainbow hues. We are quite sure that it goes back to the days of the Romans.

We felt so interested in the young husband and wife that, our purchases made and satisfactorily adjusted, we asked them a little of themselves, their life, hopes and possibilities.

"You have not been long married, of course," we said, for even now they looked next door to boy and girl.

"I don't know, monsieur," replied the wife. "We have been married nine years. All the same it is a slice out of one's life."

"Nine years! You must have married when you were children."

"Not quite that," she laughed, "but we were not very far off; and I don't think we had much wisdom to begin our marriage upon. Jules, there, was nineteen and I was seventeen. Life is very much as you look at it and take it. I don't think we have been unhappy, have we, Jules?"

"If we had our time to come over again we should do just the same," promptly replied the husband. "I can't think what people are made of who are dissatisfied with the world, and don't make the best of it. It seems a very good world to me, and if I live to be a hundred I shall not be tired of it—that is, Marie, if you are at my side," with a glance at his wife which was undoubtedly genuine and not counterfeit affection.

"But how can you make a living out of this?" giving a general look round at the collection.

"It is worth more than you would suppose, monsieur," said Madame Marie. "We sell more than you would imagine, and we make a good deal of profit on what we do sell," she candidly admitted. "If more people came to Orange—travellers on their way to and from the Midi—we should do very well. But nobody comes here; not one traveller in ten thousand; and our beautiful Roman antiquities—such as these—and our splendid Roman monuments—such as the amphitheatre in the town, and the triumphal arch outside—the Porte de Valence—languish out their days in neglected solitude. For what do the market folk and the paysans and the townspeople care for

antiquities? To them they are so much stone and brickwork—*ni plus, ni moins.*”

Madame Marie had worked herself up to a pitch of enthusiasm; the colour mounted to her face and her bright brown eyes sparkled.

“But all you say rather argues against you,” we said. “If so few people come to Orange, how can you sell your antiquities? And if you don’t sell, how can you make both ends meet at the end of the year?”

“Oh, we sell; we do sell—to a certain extent,” replied Madame Marie. “Not so much as we could wish; not even enough to make a small fortune; but all the same we do sell. And then,” she smiled, “we have a nest-egg to fall back upon. We are not entirely dependent upon our business for our daily bread. I have a *rente* of 2000 francs a year, and with that we manage very well. Ah,” she cried, “I see what you are thinking”—for it certainly flashed through our mind that after all they had not been as imprudent as we had imagined, and that Monsieur Jules had done well for himself; 2000 francs a year was quite a rich dot for one in her position. “I see what you are thinking, *monsieur*; but you are wrong. When we married I did not possess any dot. We had been married two years before this came to me, quite unexpectedly; from an old lady living at Vaison, and no one had any idea that she was so rich—for she left me only a small portion of her wealth. She used to come to Orange and lodge at my father’s, and I paid her little attentions and did all I could for her, for I really loved *Mademoiselle Marthe*, as we used to call her. She grew very attached to me, and when she died, to my astonishment and delight I came into quite a fortune.”

“But how did it go the first two years of your marriage?” we asked. “Did you not think you had acted imprudently, and like a couple of children, expecting a miracle to happen?”

“Well, the miracle did happen,” laughed Madame Marie. “And if it had not, I confess I don’t know where we should have been. The first year it went pretty well; but the second, when my baby was born, and expenses increased and funds did not, then we began to lie awake at night and wonder what was to be done. Suddenly came the fortune, and oh, life has been bright ever since.”

“Blessings on *Mademoiselle Marthe*’s memory,” we cried. “If she knows what happiness she has conferred upon you, it might almost tempt her to revisit the scenes of her earthly pilgrimage.”

“Hush!” said Madame Marie, her voice falling to a whisper. “She has done so. On two different occasions I have seen her since she died.”

“*Ma chère*——” began the husband.

“Jules, it’s of no use talking,” interrupted Madame Marie. “My husband would persuade me that it is all illusion; that I dreamed it,” she added turning to us. “But I was as wide awake as I am now; and I saw her as plainly as I see you, *monsieur.*”



"Was it here?" we asked.

"No; she was never in this house; it was only after she died that we took it. It was in my father's house, and in the room she used to occupy when she came to Orange. On each occasion I have gone upstairs without even thinking of her; and there in the middle of the room she has stood, in her black silk dress and her white lace cap, looking, just as she always looked in life, quite the *grande dame*."

"Has she seemed troubled or unhappy?"

"Quite the contrary," asserted Madame Marie. "Her face both times wore a look of complete repose: of what I should almost call rapture. The first time was immediately after her death; I did not even know she was gone. 'Mademoiselle Marthe!' I cried. 'Have you come to Orange, and without letting me know?' And then I advanced to give and receive the kiss we always exchanged in meeting. Before I could reach her—in what manner I know not—she had disappeared. I was bewildered, frightened. The next day we heard of her death, and I of my good fortune. Poor Mademoiselle Marthe," cried Madame Marie, with tears in her eyes and voice; "she so often told me I had committed an imprudence in getting married so young and with nothing to fall back upon."

"And the second time?" we asked, much interested in this kindly ghost.

"The second time was just a year afterwards," said Madame Marie. "It was the anniversary of her death; but for all that I was not thinking of her as I went upstairs in my father's house. I was indeed thinking only of him, for he was ill in bed, and in less than a month after he died. Well, on my way up I turned unconsciously, quite without thinking, into Mademoiselle Marthe's old room; and there she stood in the middle of it, in her black silk dress and white lace cap, looking just as I had seen her hundreds of times in life; the same sweet smile and calm expression of repose. Somehow I didn't feel in the least alarmed. We stood looking at each other for a full minute, I rooted to the spot; then her hand was raised as though beckoning to me, or as if she would have blessed or embraced me; and then, as before, she suddenly faded; how I could not tell; it was as noiseless and intangible as a shadow passing away from a house when the sun comes out. I can give it no other description."

"It is very singular," we remarked, for want of something better to say.

"And to me very solemn," added Madame Marie. "And now I have got it into my head that whenever one of us dies, child or parent, Mademoiselle Marthe will appear. For within a month of my seeing her the first time, my mother died; and within a month of the second occasion my father died."



"That is a mere nervous feeling," we said; "and after all is mere conjecture; for——"

"No, monsieur, not nerves at all," interrupted Madame Marie. "I am not in the least nervous about it, or concerned, or even dwell upon it. If it is to be so, let it be so. I loved Mademoiselle Marthe in life, and I am certainly not going to fear her now that she has gone to a better world. There is no purgatory for such people as Mademoiselle Marthe; I am quite convinced of that. Not all the priests in France would make me believe it; not the Pope himself. But if she appears again for any one I hope it will be for me, for it would kill me to lose my husband and children."

"You have children, then?"

"A boy and two girls, monsieur; quite enough to provide for in these hard times; we don't want any more. And here come the little girls, home from school."

As she spoke two very pretty children, apparently about six and seven years old, rushed into the shop, and smothered their mother with embraces. They were evidently the pride of their parents' heart, for the father looked on with fond admiration; and they were well cared for and neatly dressed. As soon as the embraces were over they both rushed off to regions invisible, calling out they hoped dinner was ready for they were dying of hunger.

"And where's the boy?" we asked, as the little girls disappeared and peace was restored; calm succeeding to the whirlwind.

"Ah," cried Madame Marie, with a flash of pride; "you should see my boy. He is the eldest, and truly the pearl of the necklace. He dines at school and only comes home at night. We are ambitious, monsieur, for our boy. He talks with so much wisdom; twice the sense of his years; and if the world prospers with us, we want to make him an avocat. Why not? In these Republican days it is all *Liberté, égalité, fraternité*: and if he has the wisdom, the fact that his parents are antiquarians need not prevent his becoming President of the Republic."

"Ma chère," cried the husband, "your ambition will be your ruin. One of these days you will *dégringoler* like a house of cards."

"Mixed metaphor," laughed madame: "a house of cards collapses; doesn't *dégringoler* at all. Fancy a house of cards running down hill! But you mistake me. I am not in the least ambitious. I would far rather le petit Jules became a great pleader than President of the Republic, to be shot at, perhaps, like poor Monsieur Carnot. And I would sooner he became a good man than a great man. I have only a lawful ambition for him; nothing more."

Our purchases—the ancient glass, and the ancient classical lamps, that were really beautiful and no doubt belonged to the days of the Caesars, were to be packed carefully and sent on to the Hotel de la Poste et des Princes, where we were to take luncheon. It stood in a quiet street, in which apparently the noise and crowd of the market never

penetrated. Yet as we turned into it, a small crowd had collected very near the hotel and we wondered what had happened: whether flood or fire. It was neither one nor the other, but a motor carriage, well built, admirably appointed, and looking extremely comfortable. They were more rare in those days than now, though it is only two years ago. Two gentlemen sat in it, one of them driving, and we ventured to ask him how he fared.

"Nothing could be better or more enjoyable," he replied. "We have been going about for a fortnight now without a single misadventure, and this morning have already done sixty miles. If you are going our way, pray allow me to offer you a seat."

But this was a favour we had to decline. The carriage went its way, turning the corner smoothly and beautifully, the tail of boys after it, and we entered the hotel. We found it comfortable and every one civil and attentive; but as visitors merely on pleasure bent we were evidently an exception to the rule. The landlord surveyed our case when it arrived, we told him what it held, and where we had bought it. Was it likely to be genuine?

"Yes," he replied, "I should certainly say so. They are brave people, those two; every one trusts them and respects them. And they are not altogether dependent upon their business either. Now at Avignon I should advise caution: one might trust too much." We had yet to learn how true were his words.

"These people complain of want of custom," we said. "They would do well if more people visited the town."

"That is true enough—so should we," returned the landlord with a fellow-feeling. "Few people come to Orange. Its merits are not known; and after all, it is not everyone who cares sufficiently for Roman remains, even such as we possess, to take the trouble to break their journey, whether they are going north or south. If it were not for the commercial travellers, the *propriétaires* round about, and a few people of the provinces, we might close our doors and retire: only unfortunately not on a fortune: not to a villa embowered in roses," he laughed, "but the more humble *Hospice Civile*."

"*Mon cher*," responded his wife, who stood by, "even that would be better than *l'hospice des aliénés*."

"The one would probably lead to the other," laughed the husband, with a shrug of the shoulders: "and at the best only a very fine line can separate the two."

The omnibus came up, and we concluded our short but not unpleasant acquaintance with the *Hôtel des Princes*—whether princes of Orange, Nassau, or some other principality, we forgot to inquire. We almost regretted leaving the old town, and yet, though we had only spent a morning there, we had seen all that was worth doing: the Triumphal Arch, the Amphitheatre, *Monsieur Jules* and *Madame Marie*—hosts in themselves; the *Hôtel des Princes*, and last but not least, *César* the possessed and the old custodian.

The omnibus drew up at a house, from which there issued a resplendent bride and bridegroom, the former carrying an immense bouquet, the latter holding the inevitable valise, without which the Frenchman *en voyage* is seldom seen. They entered the omnibus and took up one whole side, looking not in the smallest degree conscious or embarrassed, but supremely proud and happy: so calm and collected, they might have been married every day for a year past. We gathered from their expressions—"Ma reine" from the one, "Mon amour" from the other—that they were very much in love with each other—as in duty bound: and from their general conversation that they were about to spend a month in Paris, where not a theatre was to be left unvisited; it was to be a veritable *lune de miel*.

Then the omnibus arrived at the station, and we separated, to meet no more. H. C. was full of sighs; his visage had lengthened like an afternoon shadow. "She was really very pretty," he murmured; "much too good for him." But as we had thought them very well matched, this was nothing but rank jealousy. Our own destination was not Paris, but Montélimar, a few stations off. Only a few days before, we had received the following letter from E. who had evidently not grown a day older since, years ago, we had burnt the midnight oil in writing our chronicles to her from Majorca the beautiful.

"As you are in the neighbourhood of Montélimar," said the letter, "pray stop there and lay in a large supply of *nougat*. Do you remember how it was our favourite confection in those bygone days when like the Princess Amelia, 'we laughed and talked and danced and sang, and thought the world was made for us?' And if disappointments and disillusion have come, nougat finds no place amongst them. I have as great a weakness for it as ever—if weakness it be: and where will you find it so good and so faultless as in the town which, as far as I know, is famous only for one thing—the manufacture of the said nougat. And indeed what further fame could it need? I think I may venture to affirm that Chocolat Menier and Nougat de Montélimar are more widely known than the merits of Rome the Magnificent or Venice the beautiful, and are much more appreciated. Therefore to pass Montélimar without alighting would be a crime only punishable with—shall I say abstention for ever after from all good things?"

A request from E. is equal to a Royal command; therefore that letter decided our movements so far: and to Montélimar we were bound.

And now, beloved reader, to take you a little into our confidence, and explain why these pages on this occasion are shorn of what, no doubt, has hitherto been the greatest merit of the successive papers. There has been a break of some months in them, due to health, or rather want of health, and to a necessary and enforced absence. This

paper has been written only at the twelfth hour and on the spur of the moment, making illustrations out of the question. Moreover, sketches and photographs have gone astray, and, as yet, no offered bribe or reward has brought them to light.

An old friend, and much valued, is staying with us, for the time being making *la pluie et le beau temps* of our days: and we excused a close attendance upon our study on the plea of "copy," for which the printers' devil was waiting in the hall and using strong language. "But, there will be no illustrations," we added quite openly.

"Oh!" they cried, lifting up hands in objection, whilst the nearest approach to a frown ever seen on their face flitted across it like a summer vapour resembling an angel's wing passing over the sun: "Oh! but if there are no pictures it will be good for nothing! I must have pictures!"

It is only the truth that's painful, and this sent us back to our sanctum crushed, gloomy, and depressed: extinguished.

Will you, dear reader, indorse that terrible verdict, and complete the partial annihilation? It is no doubt deserved; but if we all had our deserts, which of us would stand exactly in the place he now occupies?



### TIME'S EXACTIONS.

A SKILFUL weaver in the days of old  
 Designed a fabric for a king to wear,  
 And gathered for it, costliest and rare,  
 Tyrian empurpled silks and burnished gold,  
 That warp and woof might glitter manifold  
 Such colours as the rainbow lends the air.  
 And then misfortune seized him unaware,  
 And all the treasure-store for bread was sold.

I sell the glorious fancies of my dreams—  
 My hope, my faith, the love I won and gave—  
 And dull, mere life, wherein no glory gleams,  
 Is all that I have now the power to save—  
 A weary toiler at ignoble themes.  
 Dead weaver, can you pity from your grave?

## CHOPIN: A SKETCH.

BORN in 1809, died 1849. The biographical dictionary gives us at least these certain particulars concerning one of the world's great men, who, like most of her great men, was not happy while he abode amongst us.

Chopin's early life was passed at Warsaw, and his musical genius must have developed very early as we find him playing at a concert in the capital at nine years of age. He studied there under excellent masters, and with him musical composition went hand in hand with mastering the theory of music. His mother was a Pole, and this fact, and that of his surroundings, greatly influenced the style of his genius.

In 1828 he went to Berlin with a scientific friend, who had been invited there by Humboldt, and here he made acquaintance with Spontini and young Mendelssohn, and had the infinite pleasure of first hearing one of Handel's oratorios performed. He went thence to Vienna, then a true theatre of piano-playing. Beethoven had just died, and his friend Hummel was in great repute, and much admired.

It was a daring venture for the nineteen-year-old artist, Frederick Chopin, to give a concert at the Imperial Opera, where his rondo (Op. 5) was performed, but he had a splendid success, and there was much marvelling at such style and talent emerging from the Nazareth of Poland, then in the throes of political agonies.

He returned to his beloved country, where he gave three successful concerts, and busied himself much with theatrical matters, with the result that he had that first love dream, which is so useful in developing an artist's fuller powers, with a young actress, Constantina Gladkowska. It was, however, but a dream, and the *adagio* of the Concerto in E minor resulted therefrom. Much sadder and more real heart experiences were reserved for Chopin than this episode contained, and he was not heart-broken when in 1832 the young singer married and forsook theatrical life.

When the troubles in Poland commenced, Chopin wanted to enrol himself in the army. He was ardent in her cause. His parents, however, absolutely forbade him to take part in the struggle. His hands were, indeed, very unfit to wield the sword. They were unusually small and delicately formed, and, in his eagerness to have the full command of the mechanism, which his own music particularly claims, he had already injured and weakened some of the overstrained muscles. His health also was never robust.

As Chopin's father was French, Paris not unnaturally soon became the young artist's headquarters. Kalkbrenner was then at

the head of the musical profession there. He at once recognised the immense talent of this budding rival, and offered to give Chopin lessons. Jealousy and a desire to appropriate some of the honours he foresaw likely to fall to the share of his possible pupil are attributed to him as motives for this offer. Chopin seems disposed to have accepted the proposition, but his early master Elsner advised him against the project, as likely to interfere with the originality of his genius.

Our hero's struggles after fame and wealth were long, weary, and so disheartening that he at length resolved to emigrate to America, when an early Polish friend and patron appeared upon the scene in Paris, and introduced him to the Rothschilds. From that date his fortune and success were assured.

In 1834 a concert was held in Paris at the Italian Opera, at which he played. One of his great concerts was given for the first time. It was a great success then, as on other occasions, when Liszt performed Chopin's music at his concerts; but Chopin's own success as a public player before a large audience was not sufficient to encourage him for another like ordeal. He contented himself in future with charming smaller and more private assemblies, whom he could sway at will, and transport from moods of wild enthusiasm and frantic gaiety to tenses of deepest sadness. And the latter phases were the most frequent; so frequent, indeed, that at times, having brought his listeners into the depths of depression, he would, on occasions, start up remorsefully from the piano, glance into some mirror near at hand, adjust his hair and cravat, and transform himself at one stroke into the personality of a phlegmatic Englishman, an impertinent old gentlemen, a sentimental miss, or a shabby Jew; for he was an admirable mimic, and himself alternated also, like Henry Heine the poet, whose acquaintance he made about then, between grave and gay. Indeed there were many points of resemblance 'twixt those two celebrated men.

In the year 1836 Chopin made acquaintance with the Schumanns, and also had the ill-fortune to become infatuated with a young Polish girl. The pair became engaged, and everything was ready for the marriage. A few days before the date fixed on for the event, Chopin had occasion to absent himself for a short visit. On his return he found his bride had profited by his absence to become the wife of a rich Count. The blow was a severe one, and both health and character suffered from it, for he was one of those men who seem specially in need of feminine encouragement and society.

He now fell under the influence of Aurora Dudevant, Georges Sand, in whose salon it was that he had met Heine. Here he also made acquaintance with Eugene Sue, Liszt, Delacroix, Ary Scheffer, and many other celebrated men who frequented her house, and were entertained by her.

Georges Sand professes to have cherished the deepest admiration,



and a sort of maternal affection, for the musician, and nothing more. What his feeling for her was, must now ever remain a mystery. He was no happier eventually in this intercourse and intimacy, than he had been in his other *affaires du cœur*.

His health was now beginning to fail; and with physical weakness came an increase of the nervous irritability so common to men of his type. In 1837 he was threatened with disease of the lungs. Georges Sand was going to Majorca for the health of her son, and offered to take the delicate musician as one of her party. He seems to have been only too delighted to go. However, the affair turned out badly. They established themselves in a disused monastery. Half of the building was in ruins, which Madame Sand delighted to explore with her son and daughter. Chopin remained alone, a prey to superstitious fears and nervous terrors, which at times almost rendered him insane. It was here he composed those wonderful pieces he has called "preludes."

His friendship and intimacy with his hostess fell through after this expedition. When he was again in Paris, he circulated a fable called "the little white blackbird" amongst his acquaintances.

"One of these little anomalies was, oh, so very sad and unhappy to find himself the butt on which all the real blackbirds discharged their sarcasms! It was a dreadful thing to be all alone in a forest full of those who were and were not your kin, but were most certainly far from kind. The trees were green, the sun shone, all was bright, but, oh, how sad and desolate he felt, when, joy of joys, one day at his side he found a second little white blackbird. And now commenced the halcyon time, all was bliss as they talked, and sang, and chirped together through the woods. The days were not long enough to contain their mutual bliss. But the weather changed. Rain came, hard, pitiless and continuous. All the feathered creatures went in pairs amid the dripping leaves, and so did they. The original little white blackbird congratulated himself doubly on having a friend in need at such a time. Alas! he looked up lovingly to communicate his thought, and perceived that, as the rain fell, his companion's feathers grew darker. In the end, before he spoke, for he hesitated with horror and amazement, the creature at his side gave a 'tweak, tweak' and flew away. She was not really a white blackbird at all, only a painted one."

For a time, Chopin seemed to recover a measure of health and strength. He resumed his old society life, frequenting one or two salons at least every evening, and paying court to perhaps three ladies simultaneously, each of whom believed herself his one and only love, and all of whom he forgot when no longer in their company. He was very fastidious, too, and, even in friendship, a word or an equivocal smile would give him offence.

When the revolution of 1848 was imminent, he took up his residence in London, where, both at court and in society generally,



he was universally fêted and admired. He gave a concert for the benefit of his distressed compatriots, the Poles.

In 1849 he returned to Paris, where he again fell ill ; and in the late autumn of the same year, he died in the arms of his sister. His friend and pupil Gutmann was also with him and the Countess Delfina Potocka, whom he asked, as death approached, to sing to him. She sang "*La Preghiera di Stradella*," and from that modulated into some of Marcello's sublime psalms. Gutmann fell on his knees, and while the chant was yet unfinished, Chopin died. All the great musicians of the day attended his funeral. His own funeral march in B flat minor and two of his preludes were splendidly performed during the ceremony. His heart was taken back to the country of his love and affection, and deposited in the church of the Holy Cross at Warsaw.

ALICE QUARRY.

---

### ON THE RIVIERA.

FAIR lady from the sullen north,  
What ask, what seek you more?  
Did ever English June bring forth  
From out its meagre store  
Such diamond light as dazzling plays  
About our February days?

O never but to dreaming eyes,  
In that cold land you love,  
Showed sapphire deep as this which dyes  
The melting heaven above,  
Or that still sea on whose bright brim  
In azure mists the mountains swim!

See where the palm-tree spreads its plumes,  
Above the violet way,  
And wild-flowers star the olive glooms  
With rose and crimson ray,  
By gardens gleaming with the gold  
Of fruit that fabled gods might hold.

"But ah! your air is faint," she said,  
"Unwinnowed by the wide sea wind;  
I miss the breath of odours shed  
From petals that the dews unbind,  
And pine, as for caressing words,  
To hear the prattle of the birds."

M. E. H.

# "THE END CROWNS ALL."

By T. W. SPEIGHT.

## I.

MR. LANCROFT, of Sorby Hall, situated a few miles on the Scottish side of the Border, lay on his deathbed.

He had insisted upon knowing the truth, and it had been told him, reluctantly enough, by the great specialist who had been called into consultation by his own medical man. He might linger for a few days, he had been told, but there was just a possibility that the end might come at any moment. He received the fatal intelligence with the utmost composure, merely remarking: "I felt sure from the first that I should not recover."

He was a man of threescore years and ten. A week ago he had been thrown by his horse, and had hurt his spine. By this time all pain had left him, which was the worst sign of all, and as he lay there on his back in bed, he told himself that he had never felt more easy and comfortable, save for one thing—he had lost the entire use of the lower half of his body. He felt like a living man chained to a log.

Dr. Carew's last visit had taken place early in the afternoon, and it was now night—a night in mid-autumn, with a cold wind, which brought with it intermittent gusts of rain, disporting itself outside. A shaded lamp burnt in the sick man's room, and near it was seated a professional nurse, engaged just now on some kind of fine needlework, but ever on the alert for the least sign or sound from her patient. There was a fire of logs in the grate, and the curtains were closely drawn.

Mr. Lancroft had lain for a long time without speech or movement, apparently engaged in watching the flickering of the firelight on the wall, but never had his mind been more actively at work than it was just then.

At length he called: "Nurse."

"Yes, sir," came the prompt response, as the woman laid aside her work and rose to her feet.

"Tell Miss Annis that I should like to see her; and please leave us together."

Annis West was the orphan daughter of Mr. Lancroft's only sister, and had been brought up by him from her twelfth year. She was now close upon her twentieth birthday.

She entered the room almost as silently as a shadow, and closing the door gently behind her, went forward, and taking one of the

dying man's hands in her own, touched the back of it with her lips.

"Are you feeling better, uncle?" she asked anxiously.

"My dear," returned her uncle, "there will be no better for me in this world."

A startled look came into the girl's eyes, and she bit her lip as if to keep down emotion.

"It is the truth, my child, and you may as well know it now as later. Sit down," he went on in a tone of kindly authority, indicating a chair by the bedside; "and if you care for me, don't make a scene. You know how I dislike tears and that sort of thing."

She was a pretty fair-haired girl, somewhat delicate-looking, and of no particular force of character. Hers was one of those loving, clinging dispositions which yield themselves readily to the influence of natures stronger than their own, more especially where their affections are at all concerned.

"I have sent for you, Annis," resumed her uncle after a brief pause, "in order to ask you a certain question, and I am especially desirous that you should give me an absolutely truthful answer."

Annis looked at him with wide-open eyes, and her lips parted as if to answer, but her uncle held up his hand.

"I know what you are about to say—that you have never spoken anything but the truth to me. Of that, my dear, I am assured. But the question I am about to ask is not an ordinary one, and only the extreme circumstances of the case (my time in this world is now very short) would induce me to put it to you."

Again there was a brief silence. Annis was waiting.

"It has long been the dearest wish of my declining years that you and Evan should marry. That you conceived a warm regard for each other from the very first I have every reason to believe; but liking is not love, although it may go some way towards it. I have watched and waited patiently in the hope that time would bring about that understanding between you which I have longed to see, but so far my waiting has been in vain. Often, however, young people have a way of shilly-shallying and holding back when all the time they have given their hearts in secret to each other; and for aught I know such may be the case with you and Evan. But now for my question. Supposing Evan were to ask you to marry him, what answer would he receive at your hands?"

The girl's eyes fell, her head drooped a little, a lovely colour suffused her face and throat, but no word spake she.

After waiting a little while, Mr. Lancroft said gently:

"Surely, my dear child, you need not hesitate to open your heart to a dying man!"

Then, in little more than a whisper, came the answer:

"If Evan were to ask me to be his wife, and I felt sure that he loved me, I should not say No."

"Thank you, my dear. That is all I wished to know."

But Annis could no longer restrain the feelings at work within her. As she rose to her feet a sob broke from her, and she hurriedly left the room.

## II.

It was close upon ten o'clock next morning when Evan Lancroft alighted from the train at Havercoats station. The telegram apprising him of his uncle's serious illness had reached his address in London late the previous afternoon. He had travelled all night, and at a certain main-line junction had changed into a local train for his destination. He was not alone in his compartment, his travelling companion being a lady, apparently young, but closely veiled, and wearing a long cloak trimmed with expensive furs, whom he assisted to alight. They at once parted with nothing more than an informal nod to each other, but a nod may convey a whole volume of hidden meaning. Each engaged a cab, he to be driven to Sorby Hall, a mile out in the suburbs, she to be conveyed to the Black Swan Hotel in the main street of the town. The luggage of each consisted of a small portmanteau.

An hour later Evan was summoned to his uncle's room, and the two were left together. The young man was genuinely concerned to find his uncle so dangerously ill; his demeanour showed it. The telegram of the day before was the first intimation he had had of Mr. Lancroft's accident; and it came upon him with a shock which for a few moments caused his brain to reel, to be told, as he now was in a dozen quiet words, that the man to whom he owed everything save bare existence had only a few more hours to live.

Of his parents Evan retained only the most shadowy recollection. They had died of cholera in India, within a week of each other, when he was little more than three years old. A year later, in charge of an ayah, he had been brought to England by Mr. Lancroft, on his retirement from business as a merchant in Calcutta.

It had always been the latter's desire that when Evan was old enough he should go into the same line of business as that in which he himself had built up his fortune; and, accordingly, in his sixteenth year he entered the counting-house of a great City firm, which, in years gone by, had had profitable dealings with his uncle. But to Evan, with his artistic proclivities which were beginning to develop themselves, the prospect of a life spent in commercial drudgery was wholly distasteful. Still, for the sake of his uncle, of whom he stood in considerable awe, he contrived to endure what he termed his "slavery" for four years, at the end of which a communication from the head of the firm caused Mr. Lancroft to summon his nephew to his presence.

As a result of the *éclaircissement* which followed, Evan was allowed

to turn his back on commerce, and to follow the bent of his inclinations. Although bitterly disappointed, the ex-merchant gave vent to no useless upbraidings.

"If the boy's heart is not in the business," he told himself, "he will never do any good at it."

So Evan was permitted to go his own way, helped by an allowance of three hundred a year from his uncle.

Seven years had gone by since then, and Evan's foot was still on the lowermost rung of the ladder which, in the folly of his youthful ambition, he had thought to climb so rapidly and easily. The sad truth was that his pictures would not sell. Visitors to the minor exhibitions, at which he was successful in getting a few of them hung, passed them by with indifference. The dealers turned up their noses at his canvases, and if, now and then, they condescended to buy one, it was at a price which caused him bitter mortification. In short, had it not been for his uncle's allowance, he must have starved. His was a by no means uncommon experience, and one not confined to the profession of painting.

Meanwhile, he came and went at intervals between London and the Hall. During the last two or three years, since his cousin Annis had finished her education, the gloomy old house had been wonderfully brightened for him by her presence there. They took to each other from the first, and Mr. Lancroft afforded them ample opportunities of being together. Evan's liking for his pretty cousin betrayed itself in a hundred different ways, so that it was scarcely to be wondered at if, as time went on, Annis began to have happy dreams of what the future might, peradventure, bring to pass.

"Sit down," said Mr. Lancroft, after he had given the young painter a little while in which to recover from the shock of the news he had just been told. "Now that my time on earth has dwindled to a span," he presently resumed, "it has become needful that you and I should come to an understanding about a certain matter which, for the last year or more, has lain very close to my heart, but which, had I been spared, I should have allowed to work itself out without any interference on my part. That, however, was not to be. The matter I refer to concerns Annis and yourself. You have seen a good deal of each other at different times, and I have been led to infer, by what I have remarked, that you are not wholly indifferent to each other. As I have not much breath to spare, I will come to the point at once. The one supreme wish now left me in this world is that you and she should marry."

Evan had changed colour as his uncle went on, and a startled look had come into his eyes. He was glad the dying man's gaze was turned another way. He drew a long breath and waited to hear more.

"I settled my worldly affairs some time ago," resumed Mr. Lancroft, "and I may tell you that the bulk of my fortune is halved

between my niece and you. Annis is both a good girl and lovable. I have had ample proof of it. Tell me, then, Evan, is there any objection, personal or otherwise, on your part to asking her to become your wife, or have you any valid reason to urge why you should not do so?"

There was silence in the room while one might have counted six slowly. Then came the response.

"What possible objection could I have, sir, to marrying so charming a girl as Annis? I should account myself one of the most fortunate of men if she would accept me for a husband."

"I am glad, very glad indeed, my boy, to hear you say so. You need be under no fear of a refusal, as I happen to know. In this case you have but to ask and to have. Lovers often hang back unaccountably, and it seemed to me that the pair of you only needed a third person to bring you together, in order that you might arrive at a proper understanding."

To this Evan found nothing to reply. He was saying to himself:

"Half his fortune! Why, he cannot be worth less than two hundred thousand pounds!"

The vision dazzled him and turned him giddy. He had always felt that he should come in for a handsome legacy, but knowing how grievously he had disappointed him in the matter of his career in life, he had not doubted that it would be remembered to his detriment in Mr. Lancroft's disposition of his property. How egregiously he had been mistaken had now been proved to him. Half his uncle's fortune! He sat as one wrapped in a golden dream.

The dying man spoke again.

"As my time is now so short, there is no reason whatever why the marriage should not take place at once. Here, across the Border, we can manage these matters more expeditiously than if we were in England. To-morrow—yes, no later than to-morrow forenoon—you and Annis shall be made one, here in this room, in the presence of witnesses. The religious portion of the ceremony can be arranged for another time. And now leave me. I am a little tired, and my doctor is overdue. Go and find Annis, and ask her the all-important question, and do not fear her reply. Let the pair of you hold yourselves in readiness for eleven o'clock to-morrow."

It was as well that Mr. Lancroft did not see Evan's face as the latter rose and staggered from the room. As a picture of amazement and dismay it could scarcely have been surpassed.

### III.

In the dusk of the same evening two persons met by appointment in a secluded lane outside the grounds of the Hall. They were Evan



Lancroft and the veiled woman who had alighted from the same railway carriage in which he had travelled.

"Well, and how did you find the old gentleman?" asked the woman abruptly the moment they met. "Is he really as ill as the telegram made out, or is it a false alarm?"

She had thrown back her veil by this time. She was a tall and finely-formed young woman, with flashing black eyes, full ripe lips, and an imperious manner.

"The doctors have given him up, and he knows it," replied Evan. "He may go off in the course of the next twenty-four hours, or he may last a few days longer."

"Let us hope that he has remembered you handsomely in his will. I'm sick and tired to death of the mean way in which we have been living for the last twelve months. By the way, you have never seen me in mourning? I have been told that it becomes me to perfection."

He winced a little at her last remark.

"I had it from my uncle's lips this morning that half his fortune will come to me—but on one condition."

"What is it?"

"That I wed my cousin Annis to-morrow in accordance with one of the Scotch forms of marriage."

"Your uncle might as well have asked you to jump over the moon. You are married already, and to me. But what did you tell him?"

"I led him to infer that I would yield to his wishes."

"What a very stupid thing to do! When you found yourself driven into a corner, why did you not take your courage in both hands and tell him the truth?"

"You don't know my uncle. Had I done as you say, I feel sure that he would disinherit me. There is still time for him to alter his will. As between him and me it's a question of a hundred thousand pounds—or nothing."

"That may be; but, as I said before, you are a married man."

"Listen, Madge. Annis is a good little thing, and simplicity personified. What I purpose doing is, to go through this Scotch form of marriage with her, which is merely a mutual promise made in the presence of witnesses, and as soon as the ceremony, such as it is, is over, to tell her privately that I have a wife already—that it was merely to please a dying man that I went through an empty form of marriage with her, and that, in reality, we are no more to each other than we have ever been. Annis is far too kind-hearted not to——"

"Enough—more than enough!" broke in his wife, passionately. "What do you take me for? What do you imagine I am made of? If you think you can persuade me, your wife, to agree to any such precious scheme, whatever you may be able to do with your weak-minded cousin, you are utterly mistaken! I dare you to do as you

propose! As sure as you are living, I will denounce you to your uncle if you do!"

Her eyes blazed, her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She spoke with a passionate vehemence which of itself was enough to prove how deeply she was moved.

Evan was dismayed. His house of cards had collapsed at a breath.

"But think, Madge, think!" he pleaded. "A hundred thousand pounds or nothing! A simple ruse to please a dying man—nothing more, on my word of honour."

"Your word of honour! Oh!" she exclaimed in a tone of infinite scorn. "Not if it were a hundred million pounds to nothing would you win my consent to any such proceeding!"

Still, knowing of old how transitory were his wife's moods, Evan did not wholly abandon hope. He reasoned and pleaded and entreated for a full half hour, till at length he so far won her over that she listened to him in sullen silence, but with brows that still lowered like a thunder-cloud.

At parting, although she repulsed him when he would have kissed her, he gathered from her manner that he need no longer fear anything worse than a sulky but inactive opposition to his audacious scheme. He had yet to learn of what a jealous woman is capable. He was naturally of a sanguine temperament, and as he hurried back to the Hall, the future painted itself before his mind's eye in the most roseate colours.

"How Madge will laugh by-and-by at her tantrums of to-night!" he told himself, smilingly. "I will buy her a victoria and a pair of greys for a birthday present, and will move to a house in Kensington; and as for my confounded brush and palette, I'll put them behind the fire!"

In the entrance-hall he ran full tilt against Annis, with whom he had had an interview earlier in the day. On the impulse of the moment he slid an arm round her waist, and, drawing her to him, kissed her on the lips.

"Darling, think of to-morrow!" he said, in a tender whisper. "I have been into the town to buy the ring."

Annis turned a face up to his that was all blushes and happy smiles, and let her head rest for a few moments against his shoulder.

"I must leave you now," said Evan, presently. "I am afraid my uncle may have been asking for me." Then, after a few more endearing phrases, he let her go.

Finding that his uncle had not asked for him, he went to his own room, where he sat smoking and reading a yellow-backed novel till midnight.

He had scarcely finished his breakfast next morning before he was sent for by Mr. Lancroft.

There was that in the way the dying man looked at him as he

entered the room which sent a shiver down his spine. Something had happened since their last interview—but what?

Having motioned him to a chair, Mr. Lancroft said: "Have you spoken to Annis as I bade you do?"

"I have not failed to do so, sir."

"And she has consented to become your wife?"

"I am happy to say that she has."

"And you are quite prepared to carry out my wishes in the affair?"

"Quite prepared, sir."

"Then perhaps you will be good enough to explain to me the meaning of this."

As he spoke he held out a folded sheet of notepaper. The envelope which had enclosed it lay on the bed. It had been brought to the Hall by a messenger a quarter of an hour before. On opening it, Evan, with a sudden sinking of the heart, saw that its contents were in his wife's writing.

"Would it not be as well," ran the note, "if, before Mr. Lancroft allows his niece to go through a form of marriage with Mr. E. L., he were to satisfy himself that the latter person has not a wife already?"

His uncle's eyes were bent searchingly upon him. He rose to his feet, a desperate man, his fingers gripping his wife's note as they would have gripped her throat had it been in their power to do so.

"Is there any truth, may I ask, in the implication which that note conveys?" Mr. Lancroft spoke coldly and without a trace of temper, but Evan knew that at such moments he was most to be feared.

"There is," he answered hoarsely. "Why attempt to deny it? I *am* married already, and this note is in my wife's writing. For all that, in order to please you, sir, and because I had it from your own lips that your end is very near, I would have gone through the form of a marriage with Annis—merely a promise before a couple of witnesses—and as soon as it was over I would have confided to her the fact of my previous marriage. I feel sure, sir, bearing in mind the peculiar circumstances of the case, that she would agree with me in regarding the little deception thus practised upon you as being at once harmless and justifiable."

"And that is your opinion of the matter? Then your notions of right and wrong are more perverted than I had imagined them to be. The real motive which underlay your attempt to deceive me is not far to seek. You wanted to make sure of the half of my fortune, which, as I was foolish enough to tell you yesterday, would become yours at my demise. But your wicked scheme has failed. The wrong you had it in your mind to perpetrate is one I cannot forgive, and from this hour I discard you. We part here and now—for ever. As it happens, I telegraphed yesterday for my lawyer to be here this forenoon. His coming is most opportune. Before he leaves this

room he will have drawn up a fresh will—a sheet of notepaper will be enough for the purpose—in which your name will find no mention. I have done with you. You may go."

As Mr. Lancroft finished speaking he turned his face to the wall, and Evan slunk out of the room like the guilty wretch he felt himself to be.

Annis was ascending the stairs as he went down. She turned a smiling face upon him, but he brushed rudely past her, and left her staring after him with astonished, tear-flushed eyes.

He set out at once for the hotel where his wife was staying. With the scene of mutual recrimination that ensued we need not concern ourselves. Hard and bitter things were said on both sides.

At length there came a pause. For the time being the vocabulary of invective seemed exhausted. By-and-by the young wife said with a sigh, and as if she were thinking aloud :

"If one could only get possession of the new will Mr. Lancroft is about to draw up !"

Evan regarded her for a few moments in frowning silence ; then he said, with a sneer :

"And what good would that do us, pray?"

"Why, don't you see, you stupid fellow, there would be a fair chance of your uncle not living long enough to make another, in which case the first will would hold good, and——"

"Tush, Madge ; don't talk like a fool !" broke in her husband with a contemptuous laugh, as he rose and began to pace the room, his hands buried deep in his pockets. "Get possession of the will when once it's in old Timpany's keeping ! You might as well try to rob him of his boots."

"Just answer me one or two questions, and try not to be ruder than you can help. What sort of man is this Mr. Timpany, and where does he live?"

"He is a dried-up old bachelor, and he lives at St. Aldred's, a town about forty miles away on the English side of the Border."

"Presumably, then, after the completion of his business with Mr. Lancroft, he will go back home by one of the evening trains?"

Her husband nodded assent.

"Carrying the new will with him?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Now listen. What I want you to do is to find out by which train Mr. Timpany is likely to travel, and bring me word as early as possible."

Evan stared at her as if he thought she had taken leave of her senses ; but, with a little laugh, she went up to him and whispered a few words in his ear.

"You'll never do it, Madge—never," he said, with a shake of his head.

"Nothing venture, nothing win. At any rate, I mean to try my best."

## IV.

THE last train going south passed through Havercoats at 11.40 P.M., and by it Mr. Timpany travelled. A bed had been offered him at the Hall, but he had declined it on the plea of having an important appointment for an early hour next morning.

He had found an empty compartment, in the hope of having it to himself, but at the last moment his privacy was intruded upon by a lady, closely veiled, and wearing a long fur-trimmed cloak. The lawyer pursed out his underlip in no very pleasant humour, and turned up the collar of his overcoat in preparation for a nap.

The lady had seated herself opposite him, and hardly had the station been left a mile behind before she raised her veil, and with a little graceful movement flung it back over her bonnet. As she did so Mr. Timpany opened his half-closed eyes to their fullest extent. Like many men who, for one reason or another, have eschewed matrimony, he was peculiarly susceptible to feminine charms, and he now told himself that rarely in his life had he seen a more striking face of its type than the one which confronted him, with its brilliant black eyes surmounted by finely-arched brows, its perfectly-rounded contours, and its glint of pearly teeth between the ruddy fulness of its lips. All desire for a nap had left him.

Presently his fellow-traveller spoke, and her voice was a very musical one.

"Can you inform me, sir, at what time we are due at St. Aldred's?"

"At 12.35, madam, and I have no doubt that we shall arrive to the minute."

"Are you all acquainted with the place, may I ask?"

"Seeing that I have resided there for the last thirty years, I ought to have a pretty fair knowledge of it."

"The person I am going there to call upon is a lawyer—a Mr. Timpany. Perhaps—— But what is the matter, sir?"

The lawyer had jumped in his seat as if someone had pricked him with a pin.

"Only this is the matter, madam, that I am Mr. Timpany!"

The lady's black eyebrows expressed the surprise she presumably felt.

"How strange, how very strange, that we should meet like this!" she said, with a smile which displayed much more than a glint of her teeth.

Mr. Timpany agreed that it was indeed strange.

"And you are on your way to St. Aldred's to seek an interview with me?"

"Precisely. Not, of course, that I had any intention of calling upon you till to-morrow; although, mind you, I should have been

there three hours ago had not my maid been taken ill on the road, and so delayed me. But perhaps I had better introduce myself. I am Lady Janet Muir, and my father is the Earl of Balquidder."

Mr. Timpany made Lady Janet a deep obeisance. No one had a more profound respect for the aristocracy than he. All the same, his wonder was extreme, and it presently found expression.

"May I be permitted, Lady Janet, to inquire as to the nature of the business which——"

"Oh, it is not any business of my own, but a matter of papa's, which is taking me to St. Aldred's," broke in Lady Janet with a musical laugh. "I am really on my way to London, but papa asked me to break my journey at St. Aldred's in order to see you, thinking that I could better explain verbally than he could by correspondence—he abominates letter-writing—the nature of the little service he wishes you to do for him. The fact is that he is negotiating by private treaty the purchase of a considerable property in the neighbourhood of your town, and he is desirous that you should furnish him with your opinion on certain matters connected with it. But we will go thoroughly into the affair in the morning. I have some papers referring to the property in my handbag. The rest of my luggage has gone on ahead of me."

Mr. Timpany's gratification was extreme, although he was at a loss to imagine through what channel the Earl of Balquidder had become aware of the existence of such an obscure person as himself.

"And now tell me, Mr. Timpany, if you can," resumed Lady Janet, "whether any of the hotels in your little town are likely to be open at this late hour, or whether I shall be under the necessity of passing the night in one of the station waiting-rooms."

"Whether either of the two chief hotels will be open when we arrive at St. Aldred's is more than I can say. But if your ladyship will condescend to honour my humble domicile with your presence for the night, both I and my sister—who is my housekeeper—will esteem it an immense favour."

The offer was frankly made, and as frankly accepted.

"In point of fact," added Lady Janet, "I would greatly prefer the shelter of your roof to that of an hotel, more especially as I have been compelled to leave my maid behind."

St. Aldred's was reached in due course, and a cab presently set down the lawyer and his guest at the door of the former.

Mr. Timpany had telegraphed by what train he might be expected, and the cab had scarcely pulled up before the door was opened, and there stood his sister waiting to welcome him. A dozen words sufficed to explain the situation to her, and although Miss Letitia—a somewhat prim spinster of fifty—was considerably fluttered by the arrival of such a guest, and at so late an hour, she received Lady Janet with a mixture of simple dignity and kindness which could scarcely fail to favourably impress the younger woman.



Supper was ready laid, and all that was needed was the addition of another knife and fork. To the servant who was in waiting Miss Letitia gave a few whispered directions.

Lady Janet proceeded to divest herself of her bonnet and cloak. While she was thus engaged, Mr. Timpany said to his sister :

"I suppose the gas in the office is not alight?"

"No, dear. The clerk put it out when he left, and I did not have it lighted again, not supposing you would want anything there to-night."

"Quite right. The matter is of no moment." As he spoke he unbuttoned his coat, and from an inner pocket drew a folded sheet of foolscap. Crossing to an *escritoire* in a recess opposite the fireplace, he selected a key from his bunch, and unlocking one of the drawers, placed the paper inside and locked it up. Lady Janet, from where she stood, could see his every movement reflected in the chimney-glass. For a few seconds she remained staring—rigid, intense, and feeling as if all the pulses of her being had come to a pause. Then her breath gave a little catch, and next moment she turned with a smiling face, twisting a stray wisp of hair round her fingers as she did so.

Lady Janet made herself very agreeable over supper, but the lateness of the hour precluded a long sitting. Before they parted, however, Miss Letitia, as a very special favour, asked Lady Janet to write her name and a "motto" in her birthday book, and Lady Janet graciously assented. So the book was brought, and after considering for a few moments with a finger pressed to her lips, she wrote :—

"'The end crowns all.'—*Shakespeare*."

"JANET MUIR."

A little later the lights in the various rooms were extinguished one by one, and silence and darkness reigned throughout the lawyer's house.

## V.

MR. TIMPANY was an early riser by habit and inclination, and although he had sat up so late overnight, he was downstairs at his usual hour next morning. He would have time before breakfast to glance over the letters which had arrived in the course of the previous day. But, first of all, he went to the *escritoire* in the dining-room. He would take Mr. Lancroft's new will and lock it up in his safe. Not many days would it be called upon to rest there. The man whose signature it bore was on the edge of his journey into the unknown land.

What, then, was his amazement at finding the drawer in which he had placed the will overnight not merely unlocked, but pulled two or three inches open! A very brief search served to confirm his fears. The will was gone!

He was staring at the rifled drawer, with his hands pressed to his head like one who fears his brain is about to give way, when his sister burst into the room.

"Such an unaccountable thing, James!" exclaimed Miss Letitia. "I sent Susan up to Lady Janet's room just now to inquire whether she would like a cup of tea before rising, but she is not there, neither has her bed been slept in!"

What Mr. Timpany thought and said may be left to the reader's imagination.

Presently his eye was caught by a little heap of flaky ashes inside the fender, which he felt sure had not been there overnight. He stooped and examined them. Doubtless they were all that was left of the burnt will. Then a thought struck him. In his pocket-book was the anonymous letter which had wrought such havoc in the fortunes of Evan Lancroft. It had been given him by his client with the remark: "Take charge of it. It is probably only so much waste paper. But in case of a dispute arising after I am gone, it may be of use."

He now took the letter and compared it with the writing in his sister's birthday book. The caligraphy of one was identical with that of the other. Mr. Timpany sank into the nearest chair with a groan. Everything was clear to him.

"Bamboozled and hoodwinked, and by a woman!" he exclaimed aloud. He felt that it would have done him good to knock his head against the wall, so extreme was his annoyance and mortification.

Two hours later a telegram reached him. Mr. Lancroft had died in his sleep in the course of the night.

"When I bade him good-bye yesterday, I did not think the end was quite so near," he murmured sadly. "I have not yet carried out his last instruction to me, but I will do so at once."

Going to his strong-room, he presently returned with a sealed document, endorsed: "The Will of Henry Lancroft, Gentleman, of Sorby Hall, in the County of Dumfries." There was a fire burning in the grate, and into the heart of it Mr. Timpany thrust the will. At the end of a couple of minutes nothing remained of it save a few ashes.

"Checkmate for Mr. Evan Fairfax Lancroft," said the lawyer as he turned away with a grim smile.

Although Evan had been so summarily dismissed from his uncle's presence, he had not quitted the Hall, nor had he any intention of doing so without definite orders to that effect. Consequently he was at once summoned after the nurse's discovery that her patient was no more. Everybody there regarded him as his uncle's heir. He was satisfied that they should do so, and issued his instructions accordingly.

It was not yet eight o'clock when he left the house to go in search

of his wife. He was on the tenter-hooks of suspense. Had her mad enterprise succeeded or miscarried? He had set his face strongly against it, but her impetuous will had overborne all opposition.

On reaching the hotel and inquiring for "Mrs. Fairfax," he was shown into the room where his wife was seated at breakfast. She had reached Havercoats by the first morning train from the south. She greeted her husband with a radiant face, and in a few rapid sentences gave him an outline of her night's adventure, but not till he had imparted the news of his uncle's death.

"And you burnt the will?" queried Evan.

"I did, after I had read it, deeming that the safest plan."

"Of course you found no mention of my name in it."

"Oh, but it did! By it you were left a legacy of five thousand pounds!"

"You surprise me. After all, then, my uncle did not quite carry out his threat of altogether disinheriting me."

"The words of the will, were: 'Not for his own worthless sake, but because he is the son of one whose memory is very dear to me, I bequeath to Evan Fairfax Lancroft the sum of five thousand pounds.'"

"Humph. Everything else, I suppose, was left to my cousin Annis?"

"Unconditionally."

"Well, five thousand pounds would have been better than nothing."

"But, in comparison with the half of your uncle's fortune, which will now be yours, such a beggarly sum is not worth regretting."

"True, Madge. But how, in the name of all that's wonderful, did you contrive to get possession of the will? You say that old Timpany locked it up in his *escritoire*."

"I had taken the precaution to go provided with a set of skeleton keys which I borrowed, paying a deposit for the loan of them, from a locksmith in the town here. About an hour and half after everybody had retired, I crept downstairs, lighted the gas in the dining-room, and, after several unavailing attempts, succeeded in opening the *escritoire*. Had Mr. Timpany put away the will in his safe, I should have been utterly foiled. I was rather sorry, though, not to be able to play the rôle of Lady Janet Muir a little while longer."

"But why Lady Janet Muir? Is there such a person?"

"Of course there is! I will tell you another time how I happen to know about her. But poor Mr. Timpany and his sister! I warrant they will talk about my 'ladyship' for many a month to come."

It was five days later—the day of the funeral.

When the sad ceremony was over, Miss West and Evan, the lawyer and the two executors under the will, met in the drawing-room.

Mr. Timpany had greeted Evan with a sort of chill friendliness,

but had maintained a grim silence about everything. There were three or four sorts of wine on the table, and he proceeded to help himself to a glass of Madeira. Then turning to Miss West, he said, with a bow:

"I drink to the heiress of Sorby Hall—to her health and prosperity."

Then, having solemnly emptied his glass, he added:

"I need scarcely say, Miss West, that I shall be prepared at any time you may please to name, in conjunction with these gentlemen"—bowing to the two executors—"to go into all matters connected with the property and investments of my late lamented client, with the sole management of whose affairs I have been entrusted since the date of his return from India."

Annis and Evan exchanged looks, as if mutually asking what Mr. Timpany meant by his strange address. There had been a great constraint on both sides since the day before Mr. Lancroft's death. Annis was wholly at a loss to understand why Evan's demeanour towards her should have undergone so unaccountable a change, but she buoyed herself up with the hope that all would come right between them when the funeral was over.

"But I was under the impression, Mr. Timpany, and so, I think, were we all," remarked Evan, "that you had come prepared to read my uncle's will?"

"So far as I am aware, there is no will of the late Mr. Lancroft in existence," replied the lawyer, in his driest tones. "It is true that my late client made two wills, the first of which, by his express instructions, I destroyed five days ago. The second will, by which he bequeathed you, Mr. Evan, the sum of five thousand pounds, was only executed the day before his death. I am sorry to have to confess that it was feloniously abstracted from my custody by the same person who addressed a certain anonymous communication to Mr. Lancroft a few hours prior to his demise. But perhaps that is a matter, sir, which you do not care to have further gone into just now."

Evan's face had turned the colour of a peony. He coughed behind his hand to cover his confusion.

"How the dickens did the old fellow find that out?" he asked himself.

Quickly recovering himself, he said aloud, and there was a gleam of triumph in his eyes as he did so:

"In that case, Mr. Timpany, I presume that Miss West and I, as being my uncle's next-of-kin, are entitled to an equal division of whatever property he may have died worth?"

"On the contrary, Miss West is entitled to the whole of it, as his only living relation."

Every bit of colour faded out of Evan's face.

"I fail to understand you," he stammered.

"The explanation is very simple. Not only was Mr. Lancroft not your uncle, he was no relation at all. Your father, Captain Fairfax, was a very dear friend of his, and when your parents died of cholera in India, leaving you wholly unprovided for, he adopted you; and when, a year or two later, he returned to England, out of mere whim, I presume (rich men have sometimes strange fancies), he tacked his own surname to yours, and passed you off to the world as his orphan nephew. No doubt his sister, Miss West's mother, knew differently, but was wise enough to hold her tongue. Should you, sir, choose to doubt the accuracy of what I have just stated, I am in a position to substantiate it by indisputable documentary proof."

Evan sat for a few moments with bowed head, his face hidden by his hands. Then he stood up, smote his forehead with his clenched fist, stumbled across the floor, and went out without a word.

Annis watched him as he left the room, and in that moment all love for him died out of her heart, and she felt only pity and contempt.

"Mr. Timpany——" she began.

"My dear," returned the old lawyer who had been wishing himself young enough to secure this pretty and amiable girl with all her wealth.

"Do I understand that everything is left to me—all my uncle's fortune—this great place?"

"Absolutely, my dear young lady. Every guinea and every acre he died possessed of, you have inherited."

"And how much does it amount to?"

"In round numbers, my dear, the investments, exclusive of this place, amount to about £190,000."

"Oh dear," sighed Annis; "how shall I bear so heavy a weight—and with no one to share the burden with me?"

"A very pleasant burden," smiled the old lawyer, "and you will think so by-and-by. As to a sharer in the responsibility, that is easily arranged. You must marry, and marry wisely, and the weight of your burden will vanish into thin air."

Annis shook her head with a very pretty determination.

"I shall never marry," she said sadly, "never; I have quite made up my mind to that."

The old lawyer shook his head too, and with equal determination, but somehow it expressed an exactly opposite view of the case.

Evan Lancroft fared better than he deserved. Annis insisted upon paying over to him, through Mr. Timpany, the £5,000 he would have inherited under his uncle's will. With this he emigrated, began a new life, turned over a new leaf, and is now in a fair way of making the fortune he once lost. His wife, too, has softened and improved, and devotes her life to her children.

As for Annis, she discovered that resolutions are often made and often broken. At the house of a neighbouring laird she chanced to

meet the real Lady Janet Muir. A great friendship sprang up between them, and it ended in Annis going to spend a long visit at her new friend's home in the adjoining county. Here she met Lord Mowbray, Lord Balquidder's eldest son, and Janet's only brother. And now it was that Annis discovered how the best resolves may come to nothing. They fell genuinely in love with each other, these two, and in less than six months after they first met, Annis had become Lady Mowbray.

No marriage could have turned out more happily; and when Annis was wont to bend lovingly over her son and heir as he lay in his cradle—he is now a strong, manly Eton boy—and traced his father's likeness in the large brown eyes that looked up so wonderingly into hers, a grateful sigh would float out upon the room as she thought of the escape she had had from a very different and far less happy fate.



#### MY GEMS.

Nor his the means, he said, his wife with gems to dower,  
And yet, and yet, within this charmed hour,  
And not an arrow's flight from where I stand,  
He placed in trust such jewels in my hand,  
That I from very pride of them and him  
Tremble, lest breath of mine should their pure lustre dim.

For ring, here is his troth; for necklet, his fair name;  
For crown his honour, and for egrette fame;  
For brooch and bracelet, truth and loyalty;  
And casket for the whole, his love of me;  
Stamped with his name and close sealed with his kiss,  
Could woman parure ask more exquisite than this?

L. D.





## A VISIT TO WATERLOO.

BY REV. E. J. HARDY, AUTHOR OF "HOW TO BE HAPPY  
THOUGH MARRIED."

ON the morning of the eighteenth of June, 1815, an enterprising young commercial traveller stood on the steps of the Hôtel de l'Europe, Place Royale, Brussels, where I wrote the following. He saw a crowd rushing up the Rue de Namur, in quest of the first intelligence of the fighting at Waterloo, and to hear the rumbling echoes of distant artillery. Immediately the traveller hired a horse and soon rode the nine and a half miles between this and the battlefield. Nothing could persuade him to retire, and while the bullets whistled round him he calmly lent his steed to a cavalry officer, who had been dismounted, merely asking him to bring him back when done with to the Hôtel de l'Europe. The Duke of Wellington witnessed this act of unpretending heroism, and afterwards called at the hotel to thank the blushing civilian in person.

The writer is by no means as brave as this traveller, and Brussels was in a much more peaceful condition on a lovely morning last spring when he and three others drove from the same hotel to see the place where the terrible battle which cost the English alone the lives of six thousand nine hundred and thirty-two, including four hundred and fifty-six officers was fought.

The road, which was the same that was passed over by troops on that memorable day, was all full of interest; interest which became intense when our driver pointed to the mound on which stands the lion made from cannon taken from the French, and erected by the Dutch to mark the place where the Prince of Orange was wounded. Soon we reach the hostelry where Wellington slept the three nights after the battle, and where his aide-de-camp, Sir Alexander Gordon, died of his wounds. The present owner, who pointed out the two small wooden beds, told us that in this room the Iron Duke attempted to write home an official despatch but that he could not bear the groans of his dying friend, and had to go downstairs to finish it. On a monument in the church on the other side of the road we read that Sir Alexander was "the object of the tenderest affection to a disconsolate sister and five surviving brothers."

Another monument records the death at the same time of another of the Duke's aides-de-camp. The inscription ends as follows:

"He fell in glory 'midst the glorious slain,  
Unmoved by aught to selfish mind allied.  
'Thank Heaven—my leader lives!' he said, and died."

What a notable young fellow must have been Lieutenant W. Robe, R.A., who, as the marble witnesses, met his country's foe for the thirty-third time at Waterloo where he fell in his twenty-fourth year!

"Pious to his God,  
Beloved by his friends and by his soldiers,  
And devoted to his country,  
His parents and family,  
While they glory in their country's triumphs,  
Must ever deplore his loss."

We were glad to see that on the slab put up by one of the regiments some of the names of the privates it lost were given, and to read that "glory encircles with the same noble diadem the humble as well as the exalted."

Talking of memorial stones, we may mention that one has been inserted in the wall of a farm-house by order of Lord Uxbridge with "a suitable inscription," to a leg which he lost in the engagement. We had so many other things more interesting to inspect that we did not go to see this inscription and consequently have failed to learn what is a suitable one for a lost leg.

We have spoken of the place where Wellington slept the night after the battle. Readers of Lord Byron know about the ball in Brussels given by the Duchess of Richmond, at which the Duke and many of his officers were present the evening before it. We visited No. 9. Rue de Cendres, and meditated a long time before that four-storey house on the transformation scene that was here enacted when news of Napoleon's approach was received.

But to return to the battlefield of Waterloo. From the church we went to a museum of relics, kept by a niece of Sergeant-Major Cotton, a Waterloo man who collected them. There are autographs of famous commanders, including those of Napoleon and Wellington, carbines, pistols, swords. In a glass case we noticed an order book exactly the same as is now used, a camp kettle of Napoleon marked "N" and "voyage," a pair of his silver spurs. In another case were several skulls marked with sword cuts or pierced with bullets, and a thigh-bone with a musket ball imbedded in it. A youth who accompanied me was very anxious to buy one of these bones.

"No," said the lady who showed us round the museum. "We do not sell them; but I have a skull upstairs of which I will make you a present."

My young friend bore away the relic in triumph, and on returning to Brussels showed it to other young people who were staying in the same hotel with us. It made me sad to see them talking and laughing over the skull of one who might have been a Waterloo hero, and who certainly once was a human being like those who handed it for inspection from one to another.

After lunch we ascended the mound on which stands the lion, and

from the top an intelligent old soldier, who acted as guide, explained the different points of interest.

"There," he said, "are the cross-roads where was an elm called Wellington's tree, because the Duke is said to have remained under it a long time that day."

The tree has disappeared under the pen-knives of tourists who believed this, but the fact is that the Duke during the fight was almost ubiquitous. It was near these cross-roads that the guards lay firing from behind an elevation, which we carefully examined, when they received the order, "Up, Guards, and at them!" The place was pointed out to us where Napoleon ordered the charge of the Old Guard, and where, when they were broken, he is said to have given his last command, "*Tout est perdu! Sauve qui peut!*" There to the right and left are the farms of La Haye-Sainte and La Belle Alliance, the former of which was defended and fought for with magnificent perseverance, the latter the place where Wellington and Blucher meeting in the dark saluted each other as victors.

But it was when the guide pointed to Hougomont that our interest became most intense. When the battle took place this was a villa and a farmyard, and it is said that as many as twelve thousand men attacked and defended it. We now descend the mount and walk over to minutely inspect it. We go through the orchard of which some of the trees were standing on the day of battle. At the bottom of this is the "friendly hollow" where our troops got shelter when too hardly pressed. We saw the red brick wall which the French, it is said, mistaking it for a thin red line of British infantry, peppered unmercifully. We examined the loopholes in it that were made by our men the night before. We could trace the marks of a shell and of several bullets over the gateway into which redcoats had climbed to shoot the French as they attempted to enter. Then we look at the well said to have been filled with dead on that day, and go on to the chapel. This had been set on fire by French shells, and it is remarkable that the flames ceased at the foot of a wooden image of our Saviour, a fact which the guide was very anxious that we should remember.


It was near here, we were told, that a certain Sergeant Graham asked his Colonel's permission to fall out, a request which surprised the Colonel and induced him to inquire the motive. Graham replied that his brother was lying wounded in the building, and in danger of being burned. The request was granted, and the gallant Sergeant having carried his brother out of the flames returned to his duty.

The only objection we have ever heard advanced to the tactics of the Duke of Wellington was answered by our visit to the battle ground. It is said that he ought not to have given battle with a forest in the rear, which would preclude the possibility of retreat. The answer is that the forest of Soignes was traversed by good roads

in every direction on the day of battle just as it was on the day when we drove past it. Most of the trees near the fighting were cut down by the artillery, but all the trees of the forest then as now grew at considerable intervals and were unencumbered by underwood, so that a force could easily retreat through them.

The day after our visit to Waterloo we saw a picture of the battle in the Parliament House at Brussels which illustrated for us what we had heard and seen on the previous day. In the corner of the picture a dog is represented sitting beside his dead master, a Scotch soldier. The people in Brussels say that this animal lived for six weeks near the same spot and then died—shall we not say?—of a broken heart.

On the lovely spring day when we visited this historic place, as we admired the young blossoms of the trees and the green cornfields through which we walked, it was hard to realise that the morning after the battle this same ground, to use the words of a survivor, "presented a most frightful spectacle." We are glad, however, to be able to record from the same source that the people of Brussels responded nobly to the appeal which the Duke of Wellington made to them for assistance in collecting and removing the wounded. "The clergy were foremost in their exertions, and numbers of ladies of honoured names were present as soon as possible to relieve the dreadful agonies as far as this could be done of so many gallant and innocent sufferers. The poor fellows, who were carried to the houses of the neighbouring villages, met with the most humane treatment."



## A VOLCANIC LOVE-STORY.

By C. E. C. WEIGALL.

## I.

"WHAT the deuce induced me to climb this mountain? If it had not been for you, Lesley, I should not be at this moment mounted on the back of a ridiculous mule following an individual, with a cap like a monkey on a barrel-organ, up a path that certainly may be said to resemble the narrow way to Heaven, for it is a matter of impossibility to walk in it," said Colonel Keith, digging his heels into the sides of his broad-backed mule and tilting his pith helmet viciously on to one side of his head. "If it wasn't for the bottle of three-starred Hennessy in the basket, and the moral certainty that if I refused you would have gone up unchaperoned rather than have not gone at all, I should turn my back on that insane crater and return whence I came—to your poor mother, with joy and singing."

His voice roused Salvatore—the stolid guide—who was steadily plodding through the powdered lava at the head of the mule.

"Il signore é bene?" he said, with the pathetic upward glance from his honest brown eyes—that is one of the characteristic charms of the unadulterated Sicilian.

"Oh, yes, I'm bene enough in all conscience," said the Colonel testily; "and fool enough, too, to have come to a land where not a soul can talk like a Christian. No signs of that confounded Casa Inglese yet? And it's getting dark! Lesley—Lesley—I say, Lesley!"

He raised his voice into a shout that rang through the dead stillness of the air and woke an unexpected echo from one of the small craters.

The girl in front raised her hand impatiently.

"Hush!" she said. "How can you talk now, papa!"

"And why the deuce shouldn't I talk?" cried Colonel Keith irascibly. "I suppose there's something here I ought to admire, but what it can be, I can't make out. There's trees and bracken—precious little of it—and not a single rabbit—and gorse, and—and mountains and lava! Now, trees and bracken and gorse and mountains—and far better specimens, too—you can get at home in England. And why you should look as if you were in church just because you have got a wide wilderness of dirty black dust under your feet beats me!"

Lesley sat motionless on her mule. She was a little tired by her

seven hours' continuous riding, and she leaned towards the saddle, gripping the Spanish pommel of it with her slim hands as the mule picked its way over crevasses and boulders and avoided precipices that would have made her shudder had she not been wrought up to a pitch beyond which nothing at all signified. Her small pale face, with her eyes like twin amethysts under their coal-black lashes, looked gravely out at the scenery, ever raised like some ecstatic pilgrim towards the white cap of the volcano. Indeed, her whole progress was like that of some passionate fanatic whose soul is fired with but one aim—that of reaching the goal of his desire.

It was one of those still September days when the world is at its fairest. The golden glamour of the Sicilian atmosphere lay upon the world like a dream, and rocked tired nerves and senses to rest. Behind them stretched the path up which they had come from Nicolosi that morning, the village set under the shoulder of the vast mountain where they had spent an uneasy night before their start. The path looked like a thread, meandering through the line of emerald chestnut woods, that intersected the desert of black lava, far beneath them. The wonderful sun-dazzled stretch of country glittered away to the sea on either side of the little island in an undulating slope of hill world. And on either hand as they rode rose extinct or burning craters, tributaries of the vast volcano that had given them birth.

Ridges of mighty lava rocks lay in their way, marking the track of the sluggish tide that had flowed down Etna's side, till it had stopped its devastating career close to the church of Nicolosi, where the inscription on the walls above the altar may still be read.

They had already left the region of vegetation behind them—the exquisite gold of the broom and green of the ferns.

Lesley's saddle was gay with flowers, for they were the outward tokens of her guide's admiration for the gentle English girl; and in her hat she wore a sprig of the *Planta Genista*.

They had left behind them the last red cranberry bush, the last tuft of moss starred with scarlet lights. And with a mighty effort the mules struggled up the crevasse and came out upon the level plain of the Valley of Desolation, that arid desert of smut-black lava that stretches without a break for three miles, till it reaches the foot of the main crater of Etna.

Lesley heaved a deep sigh, as her mule stumbled and came to a halt, panting in every sinew of its body. She drew her cloak round her, for the cold was piercing after the burning heat of the country below.

Colonel Keith stumbled up after her, with a strong expression, as his mule recovered itself with difficulty, and also came to a standstill. He was feeling more irascible than before, for he was frightened; and a man who is alarmed is ashamed to confess it, but will



wreak his vengeance on any weaker vessel that may come in his way.

"Get on with you!" he cried, digging his mule in the ribs with his heavy shooting-boots. "What the—— Why, Lesley, it is positively freezing. My dear, we had better return at once; this is a desert indeed, and really, I begin to think that even with a mouthful of brandy, the cold is more than I can bear."

Colonel Keith heaved himself down from his mule with a splutter of dismay and took a pull at his flask; then stood, slowly conveying himself into a large pilot jacket, a comforter, and another pair of trousers, and regarded his animal's forelegs with an expression of doubt.

"It's worse than a mountain battery—far worse! I never was fond of mules, and now I begin to hate 'em! That brute nearly had me off at the last corner!" he said, with an air of resignation, as Hennessy began to warm the cockles of his heart.

"This is the eighth wonder of the world," said Lesley, turning her shining eyes upon him. "I am perfectly happy, perfectly satisfied, now."

"Your poor, dear mother was quite right," said the Colonel, with a near approach to tears. "And we shall probably be murdered, robbed, starved to death. Why, there is not a soul in sight; and—and, my love, the sun is setting." He waved his hand, with a touch of tragedy, towards the horizon, where, in a blaze of crimson and gold, the sun was sinking out of sight, and the twilight was falling with the astounding swiftness of the South, that is always alarming to the British mind.

Before them, as they remounted their mules, and began to trudge wearily onwards across the Valley of Desolation, shone the white turret of the rest-house under the crater—the Casa Inglese—where they were to await the sunrise in the early morning.

Its glittering dome caught what little light was remaining, and flashed out like a lighthouse beacon before the weary travellers' eyes.

One solitary figure was plodding along the lava in front of them, like a spirit tracing the road to Dante's Inferno. He had reached the topmost ridge, and had paused evidently for breath to take the last steep steps. Beside him, there was no trace of anything living on that slope, save the pad here and there in the dust of a wolf or huge fox; and the stillness of the atmosphere made the silence almost oppressive.

"The mad Englishman, who went up without guide or mule this morning early," said Bastiano, in his broken Italian, which is soft and musical in its Sicilian patois. "They said—the Capo guide said—that he would die, but behold, he lives——"

He stopped, as he spoke, to wipe away a track of bright-red drops of blood that was trickling down the side of Lesley's mule, and which

is an animal's only relief from the mighty atmospheric pressure, that is the greatest hardship of the ascent of Etna.

Lesley shivered as he flung away the stalk of bracken stained with the blood; and she leaned down and caressed the broad neck of the mule she rode, talking to it in soft words of pity and comfort.

Then her eyes wandered towards the lonely figure on the heights above them, and stole back again with a touch of merriment to her indignant father, who was muffling himself with many groans in a fur-lined overcoat and a black-and-white comforter, which he twisted defiantly round his head and tied under his chin.

"Poor, dear father," she said softly; "I shall never cease to be grateful to you for this. You have given me the greatest pleasure of my life."

Colonel Keith's ruffled features relaxed a little under the comforter.

"There, there, my love, so long as you are pleased! It is not so bad, and at least we shall have another companion in adversity now," he said.

"But that is just the one part I think annoying," said Lesley, with a faint pucker of vexation. "We do not want a crowd of sightseers, probably doing Etna as they would do St. Peter's or the Bridge of Sighs, at so much an hour."

"Well, to my thinking," persisted her father stoutly, "it is a comfort to see someone who is not a pepper-and-salt native; for whatever you may say, my dear, I do not consider that these people are the same calibre as we are."

Lesley looked demurely at her father's flushed face, his round British figure, set off by the air of pomposity that the average Briton wears abroad; then she glanced down at the sinuous guide, trudging along at her mule's bridle.

Bastiano turned his olive face and pathetic eyes, that seemed to have all the sorrows of all the ages in their depth, upon her. He had the true Sicilian face of the country, not the crossbred, thick features of the townsman, who has married and intermarried with half a dozen nationalities, and his profile was like the head of a Roman emperor upon a coin.

Lesley recalled how they had stopped at a little roadside farmstead earlier in the day, and how he had offered her a cup of water, clear and cold as the snows from which it had flowed down on Etna, with the air of a king.

"We British are very different," she said softly.

"It has entirely to do with the matter of feeding, my dear," continued the Colonel loudly, for the cold and the brandy were loosening his tongue. "A man like that lives on a lump of black bread, an olive, and an anchovy, and washes it down with a bottle of his country wine, that tastes like vinegar that has been stirred up with a steel fork, while we British——"

"Oh, yes, papa!" broke in his daughter petulantly. "We eat our sheep and oxen, and we drink our beer, and go to sleep heavily, and so grow fat and well liking."

Then, regretting her unfilial attitude towards her father, she stretched out a little hand and laid it on his arm.

"Dear dad," she said remorsefully, "I will never ask you to come abroad again after this time. We will be quite content with Scarborough and Brighton."

Colonel Keith groaned, for his mind had gone heavily back to his club, and the cheery society of Brighton and the King's Road, where the folk always look smart and at their ease. None of his colleagues would have ever consented to climb Etna; he was perfectly certain of it. A victoria and pair on the Brighton parade fulfilled all their requirements and his also; and he felt sure that if Sir John Dawkins and Colonel Lothair Heriot could see him now, perched on the back of an insecure and utterly ridiculous mule, they would with justice write him down a fool.

The lava grew more powdery at every step, and the mules struggled gallantly upwards, sinking fetlock deep at every stride, till they stood panting and exhausted outside the low railing that separated the Casa Inglese from the rest of the lava plain.

"What a place!" groaned Colonel Keith. He swung himself off his mule and stood surveying the white-domed building with an air of profound contempt. "A Briton would have fixed the whole thing up so differently, with a place where one could buy warm drinks, a photograph-gallery, perhaps, and hot and cold water laid on. There is surely no attempt at comfort or cleanliness here."

Lesley disengaged herself with a slight effort from her saddle and sprang lightly to the ground.

A man in a heavy Inverness cloak was standing on the steps, lighting his pipe, and he surveyed the newcomers with a shade of discontent. He was the traveller who had reached the summit before them, and he looked as cool and collected as though he had not just undergone a stiff climb of eleven miles.

He came forward to Lesley's assistance, for she was so stiff that she could hardly stand, and helped her into the house.

"Allow me to offer you some hot coffee; I can see that you are cold and tired," he said, with grave calmness. "I have just made some for myself, and it really is not at all bad."

Lesley smiled wanly.

The man was not specially good-looking, and he was certainly over thirty. But he had a square determined face that she rather liked, and a clear-cut mouth, shaded by a dark moustache. His eyes were kindly grey ones, and they twinkled a little as he looked down into her dismayed face.

She did not notice the sharp line of tan cutting jagged-wise upon his forehead, where his forage cap had rested, plainly denoting his

profession. But she said to herself that he must be a soldier, for only a military man could have such frigid, reserved manners, and yet be so civil.

The Casa Inglese is a small cold building, more like an ice-house than any other species of abode. And when Lesley passed impetuously through the narrow passage, and pushed open the door of the sleeping rooms, she gave an involuntary cry of dismay.

The larger of the two was a bare whitewashed room, the walls of which were lined with bunks, ranged one on the top of the other, like a second-rate steamer. And each bunk was possessed of a brown blanket and a hard straw-stuffed pillow.

In the centre of the apartment stood a large deal table, on which the guides were already busy laying out the food that the saddle-bags had contained. And on the open hearth, a tray full of smouldering charcoal was set, with a tin coffee-pot poised insecurely on the embers.

The sight of the room in which he was to pass the night proved too much for Colonel Keith's feelings, and he collapsed heavily on to the side of the lowest bunk.

"Good heavens, and have I come so far for this!" he ejaculated faintly. "I would not keep my dog here, and it is not even good enough for a chicken-house. What do you propose to do, my love?"

Lesley plucked up her failing courage, and took a cup of coffee from the stranger who had followed them in.

"It will not look so bad, papa, when we are warm, and when—when the fire is brighter," she hazarded.

The Colonel's lack-lustre eyes wandered to the bunk on which he was sitting, then along the wall and the continuous row of bare beds, and the truth of the whole situation flashed upon him. There was but one room for the tourists, for the outer one was to be occupied by the guides. He saw the stranger's valise and coat on one bunk, in the furthest corner of the room, and the stranger's bread and butter, and brandy flask on the table. And he groaned in spirit.

"I cannot think of sleeping in this infernal hole," he said loftily. "One might as well lie down in the street. May I beg the pleasure of your name, sir? I am sorry that I have no cards with me, but my name is Keith—Colonel Keith—late of the Dublin Fencibles, and this is my daughter, Miss Keith."

Not a smile crossed the solemn features of the stranger. It might have been an occurrence of every day, to talk of card-cases on Etna.

"And I am John Richardson, a Captain in the Buckinghamshires, now quartered in Malta. And I sincerely hope that my presence will not inconvenience you. It is hardly a question of sleeping, for we have to get up at three o'clock in the morning to see the sunrise."

It struck Lesley at that moment that it was not a question of their inconvenience but of his, for he had been the first arrival at the Casa Inglese. But Colonel Keith acknowledged the introduction with a bow, and the intelligence with a groan, and then heaving his legs into the bunk turned his face to the wall.

Lesley looked up at her new acquaintance with a smile.

"Poor papa!" she said softly. "It is terrible for him." Then she turned to Colonel Keith.

"We shall manage very well, papa, if you only will not trouble," she said gently. "You must drink some coffee; it is excellent."

"I am well aware," said the Colonel's muffled voice, "perfectly aware that nowadays people who have come to years of discretion are fools, and that wisdom alone has been given to babes and sucklings. Nevertheless, I do not consider this promiscuous picnicking decent, and I am sure that your poor dear mother would be horrified. Thank you, my love, I am not accustomed to drink diluted mud, and to call it coffee. It is now, as I perceive from my watch, seven o'clock, and as we have to rise again at three, I shall go to bed, if you can dignify my proceedings of this present moment by such a name."

"Oh, papa!" said Lesley faintly, as she watched her father swathe himself in all the spare blankets that he could absorb from the bunks within reach, and then roll himself round like a mummy. Her eyes were full of tears as she saw him retire among the clothes. But when she glanced at her new friend, she felt suddenly cheered, for he was decidedly smiling, and his smile was very pleasant.

"There are a great number of hardships connected with mountaineering, for which no doubt your father was not prepared," he said pleasantly. "But since we have come so far, do you not think that we should try to make the best of them? At least, we may enjoy ourselves for these few hours. And as our guides are very anxious to make a bonfire under the stars, as a signal to the valley that we have arrived safely, to my thinking it would be a good idea to go and help them."

"Oh, yes!" cried Lesley, dashing away a tear. "That is a lovely idea!"

He held the door open for her, and they passed out. And the last sound that assailed their ears as they left the room, was the loud shout of Colonel Keith to Antonio, to fill every available empty bottle with boiling water, and put them round him, for that he was freezing. And the last sight that they saw as they fled away like children let out of school, was the despairing wave of Antonio's hand as Lesley paused to translate her father's request into her pretty broken Italian. Then they disappeared into the crisp starlight night and left the cold rest-house and the irate Colonel behind them

## II.

CAPTAIN JOHN RICHARDSON was a misogynist. Years ago he had been young and credulous, and had been deceived and his faith in human ideals shattered by a young and lovely woman. And Malta, the station where he had been quartered for some time, was scarcely the place to restore idyllic life to its pedestal.

It was well known in the regiment that he never approached a petticoat within speaking distance. And it was popularly supposed by the young and profane subalterns—to whom nothing is sacred—that, when he went on leave, he either spent the three months in a Trappist monastery or in shooting bears somewhere in the region of the North Pole, where as yet the foot of no petticoated explorer had ventured.

He was well endowed with the good things of the world—so well endowed that he might almost be considered that anomaly, a rich soldier who soldiered for the love of his profession. He played polo now and again in Malta; but at the end of his "quarter," he never approached the stand where the fair sex were drinking tea and flirting. But he had often been heard to say that women had driven him to golf in Malta, for that none of them ventured to cross the sacred links when the nobler sex was sporting.

Thus it seemed to him an irony of fate to be stranded alone on Etna with a young and attractive girl. The extraordinary part of the whole matter was that he did not feel the cold shudder of horror running down his spine that generally assailed him when he approached a young woman of Malta within a yard.

She appeared to be enduring the disagreeable side of the expedition with such pluck, yet at the same time she was so essentially dainty and feminine, and so natural and unaffected, that he felt he could not regard her with horror. And after all, he was returning to Malta—after a tour about the regions of the lower slopes of Etna and the sea-coast towns—on the very next day, and would see her no more. It would therefore, all things being considered, be very churlish not to do his best to make her position more comfortable than it might otherwise have been. And he would treat her from a man's point of view, as an indispensable incubus, or perhaps as a chum. And he would forget that she belonged to the obnoxious sex who wear petticoats and are never content save when they are luring some man to destruction.

The darkness of the night on Etna was touched with calm brilliance by the stars that glittered frostily above their heads. The crescent moon, like an arc of molten silver, was sinking in the west above the mountains of Calabria, that loomed like dim night shadows. Small craters, outlets of the mighty volcanic power of Etna, were smoking merrily on both sides of them as they stood. And the smell of the



sulphur as it bubbled in pools and fissures would have been oppressive had it not been for the intense cold of the atmosphere that starred the ground at their feet into little splinters of ice. The bonfire was roaring its way up to Heaven, and the guides were feeding it with straw and scraps of dried wood that they had ferreted out of the mules' stable.

Lesley and Richardson stood in the flare of it warming their chilly hands, and watching Bastiano waving lighted torches of straw and pitch above his head to carry word down into the valley that they were well.

He looked so like a demon dancing in the lurid fire glare that Lesley shivered as she gazed at him and then at the mountain spur on which they stood, sheer above the Valle del Bove. She seemed to be so small an atom in this mighty universe that she stumbled, half fainting, against her companion, and he caught her by the arm and pulled her back into safety: then laughed at himself for his sudden panic.

They hurried back to the house when he had scolded her into fortitude again, and found Colonel Keith sleeping heavily. But, as it was still early, Richardson suggested that they should go up into the observatory, where the Italian professor of astronomy was keeping his lonely ten days' vigil with the stars. They climbed the narrow stairs together—Lesley with a sense of awe upon her that kept her silent—and came out on to the floor of the vaulted dome, where the huge telescope was creaking weirdly as it revolved from star to star.

It was very dark, and when the professor with a friendly word of welcome reached his hand down and helped Lesley on to the ladder, Richardson stepped up beside her and folded his cloak closely round her shoulders. Then, adjusting the telescope so that she could peer through the gigantic lens, he told her to look up at the wonders of the planets.

It was a night that Lesley will never forget. The gloomy observatory; the creaking telescope, worked by ropes that were pulled from the far corners of the room; the soft-voiced professor in his slouched hat; the marvels of Sirius flashing scarlet and blue above her as she watched the planet Venus; the insecurity of the immense ladder on which she was perched like a fly; and, above all, the warm protecting arm of the man at her side.

She was in a dream. And when she softly bade "Buona Sera" to the professor, gave him her slim hand, and followed her companion down the stairs again, her eyes were misty as she looked up at him.

"Now you must go to bed and try to sleep," said Richardson gently. "I am going back to the professor for a short time, and I do not intend to go to bed at all, but sit by the fire and keep the room warm till morning. Good-night, brave little companion."

Lesley lay down in her narrow bunk with that warm hand pressure still on hers, listening to the heavy breathing of her father above her, where he lay with his hot bottles, wrapped in his blankets. The wind moaned against the shuttered window, and the charcoal flickered fitfully upon the hearth. The guides were talking drowsily in the outer room as they said their evening prayers, and a mule whinnied in its stall.

An hour later, when Richardson crept in on tip-toe, the room was very still. There was an empty brandy-bottle on the table, and his own flask lay empty beside the bottle, and when the full significance of this flashed upon him, he smiled very grimly. Colonel Keith had absorbed every available drop of spirits, and the heaviness of his sleep was accounted for. He at least was warm within and without, and Richardson sat down to keep his cold vigil by the charcoal embers, wondering what he should say to Lesley on the morrow, when her father would be incapable of scaling the crater.

He rose noiselessly and crept to the lower bunk, where, with the blankets wrapped tightly about her, lay Lesley. Her hair had escaped from its fastenings under the sealskin cap that she still wore, and had strayed across the warm ivory of her forehead. Her lips were parted as she breathed as softly as the sea rising and falling on an early summer's morning, and her black lashes lay on her cheeks like shadows of the night. One slim hand lay under the contour of her rounded cheek, and the other nestled like a bird against the dingy blanket in which she was wrapped from head to foot.

He glanced at her, and turned his eyes away humbly. He was not fit to look upon such innocence and such loveliness asleep; and he went back to his vigil with a strange new feeling in his throat that reminded him of the day when by chance he had killed a lark mother-bird sitting on her nest when he was rabbit-shooting at home.

When the fire died down he found himself nodding in a brief slumber, from which he continually strove to escape, with a stern sense of the duty of keeping his eyes fixed upon the charcoal brazier.

He was back again in his boyhood in the intervals of fitful slumber. The wind moaning against the pane made him dream that he was on the bare level plain of his north-country home; and he woke to full consciousness, with a start, to find that his eyes were strangely moist, for he had thought that his mother, who had been dead long years, had bent over him and laid a kiss, light as an angel's wing, upon his lips.

The guide was knocking at the door, with the unwelcome news that it was three o'clock, and he roused Lesley as the Sicilian began to bustle about the room, preparing the coffee. The girl was awake in an instant, springing from her narrow berth as spruce and dainty as though she had not been sleeping all those hours in her clothes. She blinked like a star as she opened her eyes and pushed up her hair.

"We must wake papa," she said, as she slipped her pretty feet to the floor and touched the arm of the sleeper.

At the sound of his daughter's voice Colonel Keith stirred a little in his heavy slumber and opened his eyes wildly. He murmured something that was not articulate, and Lesley turned eyes of horror upon her companion.

"He is ill—he is very ill!" she cried. "He is delirious; and—oh, how strangely he speaks! He thinks that we are at home, and that I am the servant bringing him his tea. What shall I do?"

"My dear Miss Keith, it is nothing but a slight attack of—of mountain delirium, not at all a strange occurrence on the top of any lofty peak like this," said Richardson in some confusion, fixing his eyes upon the oil-lamp that was giving out a feeble glimmer in the corner of the hut. "If we—we leave him to himself for a little quiet sleep, I assure you that he will soon recover completely."

He felt himself almost a participator in the Colonel's crime as he watched the relieved light that flashed across the girl's face.

"I am very thankful," she said tremulously, "for if papa had become ill, I never should have forgiven myself for persuading him to bring me here. We must go at once, or we shall miss the sunrise."

He paused to leave one of the guides in charge of the prostrate Colonel, with a swift explanation of the case in his excellent Italian, and old Antonio's face lightened from its ordinary melancholy into an expression of keen pleasure as he realised that a signor so venerable and majestic had made away with as much spirit as would have kept an army of guides warm and comfortable for two days.

The situation presented features of extreme awkwardness, but Richardson, as he hastened after Bastiano and Lesley into the darkness, felt that it behoved him to live each moment as it passed him by instead of looking forward to a possible future.

The eleven hundred feet of powdery lava, steep as the side of a house, up which they had still to climb, loomed before them, in the night air, and giving his arm to Lesley they ploughed their way upwards together, he supporting and cheering the girl with words of encouragement, till they stood at last upon the topmost edge, and Lesley sank to the ground, exhausted and silent. He gave her a mouthful of the wine that they had brought with them, and when she had a little recovered herself and regained her breath, he helped her up with his strong arm about her waist and led her to the mouth of the crater with a feeling of decided pleasure that she was thus dependent upon him.

The crater is more than a mile in circumference and of considerable depth, and Lesley turned and clung to him, half-terrified at the sight of the lurid fire that was blazing round its horrible yellow side in fitful jets, and the stench of the sulphur that was creeping slowly upwards in a pillar of smoke. Bastiano indicated the points of interest to

them, and Richardson listened and explained the voluble Sicilian patois to the girl at his side. She was almost too frightened to enjoy the scene, for her nature was so impressionable that it seemed to her that they were standing with their feet on the borders of Inferno itself.

She murmured something of this to her companion, still clinging to him, and when she had recovered a little from her trembling, he led her nearer, and held her closely while she peered over into the abyss. It was sweet to see her dazzled eyes, and the strands of her loosened bright hair about her glowing face as she looked up at him, and then turned, at Bastiano's cry of "*Il sole, Il sole,*" towards the east.

The sun was coming. The long level plain of the sky was pale with tremulous pearly light, and the shivering sea rippled into a sheet of silver. Then the tops of the mountains away in Calabria caught a shaft of fire that turned their peaks to gold, and the gold spread downwards into the long valleys at their feet, and glittered on the olive groves and the broad white stretch of shore, where the fishing boats were drawn up in a line. Far away upon the horizon the barren rock of Malta rose out of the ocean, with its forts of bristling guns, and the half-suggested shadow further away again told of the sandy shores of Africa.

The magic of the hour was upon Richardson, and he took the girl's hand.

Etna alone was in darkness, for the light was on the valley; on Taormina and its sheer crag, on Randazzo, on the chestnut woods of Maniace; till it crept upwards, and always upwards, to their feet, and the whole sky was a blaze of crimson and gold. Lesley drew a long deep breath of wonder that was half a sob.

"Oh, I am glad that we saw it together," she said involuntarily.

And all the way down the slope again he was puzzling over her words, and wondering why he did not feel as though he disliked them.

### III.

WHEN they again reached the Casa Inglese in safety, they found the invalid still in a state of unconsciousness, and they had to face the problem of a further stay on Etna of some hours.

The food might hold out, Bastiano declared with a shrug, and at least if they were starving the professor upstairs might help them with a tin of compressed meat. But one thing was certain, that they could not move Colonel Keith in the condition in which he then was. He was helpless, and even had they possessed a litter, it would have required a stronger force than two Sicilians and one Englishman to carry him down the slopes of Etna.

With the skilled decision of a man who has some knowledge of

the case, Richardson declared that by nine o'clock the Colonel would be conscious, but that he would be unable to move down to Nicolosi again before nightfall, and perhaps not then.

And, closing the door of the room in which he lay behind him, the young man persuaded the guides to light a fire in the outer room, by which he and Lesley sat. Now that they had seen and done everything that there was to see and do on the mountain, it would have been more than a trifle monotonous for the young couple had they not become unaccountably interested in one another; to such an extent indeed that the time seemed to pass by on swift wings.

Richardson had so much to say for himself, although none had ever discovered it before. And Lesley found that there were realms of art and literature to which she had never ascended, but which, expounded by this young man with the determined mouth, presented charms hitherto unimagined. It was close upon midday before the thought struck her that it was strange he should still be lingering on the volcano, when he had expressly told her that it was important for him to be at Catania that night. They were walking together in the brilliant sunlight upon the slope overlooking the sea, when she made this discovery, and paused with a little cry.

"Oh, I am so sorry! I am afraid that you remained here with me because you felt obliged to; because you did not want to leave me alone with the guides when my father was ill," she faltered.

Richardson looked at her, and as he looked a strange agitation came over him. He glanced behind her at the shuttered windows of the Casa Inglese for inspiration. At the upper casement the Italian professor who had been up all night with a new planet was shaving leisurely, and he waved his hand to the young Englishman with a gallant air of encouragement.

"I—I did not want to go," faltered Richardson, feeling that he would have rather a hundred times been facing the enemy at Maiwand than avoiding the clear eyes of the girl at his side, whose innocence was at that moment absolutely overwhelming.

"But—but I know that you have done it out of kindness, and I thank you very much," said Lesley, with the charm of manner that signalled her every word. She glanced at him from under the big straw hat that she had donned, and meeting his glowing eyes, looked away across the slope to where the woods below them were gleaming in the sun. She had told him so much of her young dreams, of the quiet country home where she dwelt in the summer, and the cherry tree that blossomed outside her window, where the thrushes woke her in the spring among the snow shower of blossoms, that he seemed to know every thought of her pure gentle mind.

She was one of the women whom he had dreamed of, but had never met; and he felt glad and thankful that he had not even suggested to her sweet mind the real cause of her father's illness.

"I—I—it gives me pleasure to be here with you," he said lamely.

"I think that it is very nice of you to say so," said Lesley warmly. "You are quite the nicest man I have ever seen. I feel that I can talk to you and tell you everything, and I do hope that we shall meet again. I have seen a few other men in Brighton, but they are so different, so stupid—and I don't like them."

Inspiration was not in the windows of the Casa Inglese. He glanced desperately lower. The professor was sunning himself on the steps of the Rest House, examining the thermometer with the air of a connoisseur, and he kissed his hand with a foreign gesture to the couple sauntering in the sunlight.

"They are courting," he said to himself; and, with all an Italian's delicacy, he set off for a brisk walk in the opposite direction.

Richardson moved a pace nearer and took Lesley's hand. His own was trembling so much that he could scarcely command himself.

"My dear," he said, "it is the strangest thing, but I—whom the world reckons to be a woman-hater—would like to be with you all the days of my life. Lesley—let me call you so this once—you may think me a fool, or presumptuous, or another volcano, if you will, but I love you."

They had approached in their gentle walk so near to the window of the Casa Inglese, that as he spoke the voice of Colonel Keith was heard loudly demanding his daughter in tones that were extremely rational.

"I—I—can hardly tell you what I think. It is so sudden, so unexpected. My father wants me to marry a man at Brighton, who has a great deal of money. I—I do not know; I don't like him," faltered the girl. "I only know that I feel quite different when I am with you, though I have known you only a few hours," she said, with growing nervousness. "I cannot make it out—cannot understand it. I feel bewildered."

"Lesley—Lesley!" bawled Colonel Keith.

"Walk about here, Lesley, and think over what I have said," said Richardson, with agitation. "And try, my dear, to think that what you feel must be love for me. I had better go to your father, he will require careful nursing for the next hour or so, and I think that I can nurse him with more success than you." And he left her with a beating heart.

Colonel Keith was sitting up in bed, with an abortive attempt to seem at his ease. His eyes glanced hither and thither through the room, as if in search of something.

"Where is my daughter—Lesley," he said sombrely, as Richardson walked in. He had suffered a lifetime of misery in those brief fifteen minutes since perfect possession of his faculties had returned to him, for he had realised, with all the annoyance of a temperate, hard-headed man, that the bottle of brandy and the freezing cold had



betrayed him. Therefore he averted his face, with a dogged air of resentment. For this young jackanapes had no doubt traded on his helplessness to preach a lesson to Lesley on the iniquity of elderly men setting themselves up to the young as guides, philosophers and friends.

Richardson approached and laid his hand on the Colonel's fevered fingers.

"Look here, sir," he said suddenly, driven to the impulse by the worry and vexation written in every line of the miserable face: "your daughter is outside. She thinks that you have had an attack of mountain sickness, and she need never know anything else. Between you and me will rest the real history of your indisposition; and, after all, it was very natural in the awful cold. You didn't know what you were doing. But," he smiled, "you need not have taken my brandy as well as your own."

The expression of Colonel Keith's face was enigmatical.

"I suppose there is no use in attempting to disguise anything from you," he mumbled. "You young men are so awfully clever nowadays. But I do feel bad. I am really too old to come on these expeditions. But—but what did you tell Lesley?"

He started up with sudden energy. A vision of an irate Mrs. Keith and a weeping daughter, flashed across his distracted brain. For why should this stranger have really withheld the whole truth from his child? He would never see this young soldier again. And probably, since he had not even been decently civil to him, he had hinted at something to the girl, and Lesley would tell her mother, and there would be chaos.

"Look here, sir," said Richardson abruptly, as he handed him a cup of strong tea, laced with a suspicion of the dog that had bitten him: "do you think that I am a cad? Because, if so, let me hear you say so at once, and I shall know what to do."

He spoke with such unnecessary heat, that Colonel Keith looked up surprised. "No, no," he said, "I am sure that you are a gentleman. But I do not quite understand what you mean, or why you remain here with us. I suppose that it must be many hours now since—since I was taken unwell?"

"It is getting on for afternoon, sir," said Richardson; "and I have been here since last night."

"Oh," groaned Colonel Keith. "And my head is so bad that I cannot even think intelligibly."

"Colonel Keith," said John Richardson solemnly, "you drank too much brandy, and left me along with your daughter on Etna. What do you think your wife will say to you when you return?"

"Heaven knows, for I do not," said the Colonel piously. "And Lesley has her mother's frankness, and I dare not insult her innocence by binding her to silence. Why, she would never believe in her old father again."

"Since that be so," said Richardson deliberately, "I will assure you that Lesley has not even the most remote idea as to the origin of your illness ; and also that I have fallen deeply in love with her. If you will give Lesley to me for my wife, I swear to you that no faint rumour of this *contretemps* on Etna shall ever penetrate to Mrs. Keith's ears."

Colonel Keith stretched out his hand that shook like an aspen leaf. "My dear fellow, it is a bargain ; and may you never know what it is to possess a wife with a tongue like a lanyard," he said curtly. "Just go and tell that scoundrel Antonio that I am ready for the mule now, and we will reach Taormina before midnight. Of course, you will accompany us."

And as there was an announcement in the *Morning Post* three months later to the effect that "Captain John Richardson, of the Buckinghamshires, had taken unto himself Lesley Pamela Keith, at the church of St. Mary's, Moorfield in the Fens," there was no doubt that he had accompanied them down the mountain, and that his journey to Taormina had been attended with the most satisfactory results, both to himself and to pretty Lesley Keith.



### WHEN LOVE SHALL COME.

WHEN Love shall come—  
Shall lay his torch upon your slumbering heart,  
And as the fiery flames upleaping start,  
Wrap your whole soul in its effulgent glow—  
When Love shall come to you then shall you know,  
You, who so scornfully my hand can slight,  
The bitter anguish that is mine to-night.

Nay, do not jest!  
Is it so small a thing, a strong man's love?  
So slight a thing to know that you can move,  
Sway his whole being with your artless wiles,  
Your madd'ning prodigality of smiles—  
Is it so small a thing? Nay, jest not so!  
When Love shall come to you, then shall you know.

Oh, love of mine!  
Half child, half woman! In whose azure eyes  
No touch of lovelight softly gleaming lies,  
Someday you too before Love's feet will fall,  
Your heart leap up to hear his clarion call  
And in a flash reveal yourself new born.  
God pity you if one your love should scorn!  
Spirit of fun and coquetry inblent,  
I can forgive you your mad merriment;  
Someday you too will crave some heart and hand,  
Someday look back, repent, and understand—  
When Love shall come!

ANNIE G. HOPKINS.

